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DE QUINCEY'S COLLECTED WRITINGS

VOL. X

LITERARY THEORY AND CRITICISM

THE

COLLECTED WRITINGS

OF

THOMAS DE QUINCEY

BY

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IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

VOL. X

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

While passages of literary theory and criticism are to be found plentifully enough in the preceding volumes, interspersed through their various kinds of matter, it is in the present volume and the next that the reader will find collected those particular Essays of De Quincey in which he either expounds more formally his views of the principles of literature in its different varieties, or applies these more expressly to individual cases.

The *Letters to a Young Man whose Education has been neglected* were written in 1823, when De Quincey was in the first celebrity of his Opium-Eating Confessions. Though in his wayward and corner-exploring fashion, they are really excellent, and may be read still with profit, not only for the interesting information which they contain on some matters of literary history, but also for edifying doctrine on some vexed questions in the business of self-education. In this last respect, they may be recommended, I think, for a certain real practicality, a quality of solid good sense, which we are not in the habit of always attributing to De Quincey. That they attracted a considerable amount of attention at the time of their original appearance in the *London Magazine* is curiously attested by a whimsical compliment which they received from the most popular, and now best remembered, of all De Quincey's fellow-contributors to that old periodical. The title of De Quincey's series of articles had amused Charles Lamb so much that he could not resist the opportunity of writing a little parody on them in the shape of one "Letter to an Old Gentleman whose Education has been

neglected." This appeared in the *London Magazine* for January 1825 ; and it may be now read among Lamb's *Eliana*. Although a cleverish piece of good-humoured fun, it is not up to Lamb's usual mark in such things ; and its chief interest now lies in Lamb's prefixed apology to De Quincey for the liberty he had taken. It was in the indirect form of this missive to the editor of the magazine :—"Dear "Sir,—I send you a bantering 'Epistle to an Old Gentleman "whose education is supposed to have been neglected.' Of "course, it was suggested by some letters of your admirable "Opium-Eater, the discontinuance of which has caused so much "regret to myself in common with most of your readers. You "will do me injustice by supposing that in the remotest degree "it was my intention to ridicule those papers. The fact is, "the most serious things may give rise to an innocent "burlesque ; and, the more serious they are, the fitter they "become for that purpose. It is not to be supposed that "Charles Cotton did not entertain a very high regard for "Virgil, notwithstanding he travestied that poet. Yourself "can testify the deep respect I have always held for the "profound learning and penetrating genius of our friend. "Nothing upon earth would give me greater pleasure than "to find that he has not lost sight of his entertaining and "instructive purpose.—I am, Dear Sir, yours and *his* sin-"cerely,—ELIA." As Lamb's words indicate, De Quincey had not quite completed the series of the letters parodied, but had broken it off unexpectedly at the Fifth Letter. After July 1823 he had occupied himself with other things for the *London Magazine*, and at the close of 1824 his connexion with that periodical had ceased altogether.

The paper entitled *Rhetoric* was one of De Quincey's earliest contributions to *Blackwood's Magazine*, having appeared there in December 1828, in the guise of a review of Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric*, then just published. As De Quincey himself explains, however, it is not so much a review of Whately's book as a discursive essay suggested by the appearance of Whately's book. Indeed, from the point of view of previous tradition respecting the business of Rhetoric, the title of the paper is to a considerable extent a misnomer. As this matter is of some importance, it is reserved

more in detail for a footnote or two to De Quincey's text. Enough to say here that, while Aristotle's definition of Rhetoric, current through the Greek and Roman world, makes it the whole Art and Science of Oratory, and includes the subject of Style or Diction only in so far as it connects itself with the orator's art, and while the modern tendency, on the other hand, has been to neglect all the more solid and more abstruse substance of the Ancient Rhetoric and to identify Rhetoric wholly with the one subject of Style or Diction, but at the same time to broaden the old view by treating of Style or Diction in relation to Literature universally, De Quincey,—after one real and acute incision into Aristotle's Rhetoric at a particular point, but in the midst of other remarks which show an imperfect recollection of Aristotle's treatise,—emerges with a conception of Rhetoric which is specifically his own. Rhetoric, with him, in the present article at least, is not the art of style or literary expression generally, nor even of what is called eloquent style—for he distinguishes between Rhetoric and Eloquence—but the art of one particular kind of literary practice. It is the art of rich or ornate style, the art of conscious playing with a subject intellectually and inventively, and of never leaving it till it has been brocaded with the utmost possible amount of subsidiary thought, humour, fancy, ornamentation, and anecdote. Grant him this sense of the words Rhetoric and Rhetorical, however, and he rewards you for the concession. There are few things from De Quincey's pen finer and more shapely in execution than his survey in this paper of the history of the Rhetorical Literature of the world in the sense postulated, ending with a series of notices of those whom he regarded as the chief masters of the rhetorical style in the English speech.

The long paper which immediately follows under the simple and somewhat vague title of *Style* is kindred with the preceding by the nature of much of its matter, but is more extensive in its range, and more fascinating by the multiplicity and novelty of its topics. Like most of De Quincey's papers, it is, *prima facie*, very discursive. You never know what is coming next. Now you are among English writers, now

among the Greeks and Romans, now among the French or the Germans; now you are in a garden, now on the sea-shore, now in the depths of a wood. His proclaimed subject being Style or Diction, and a large portion of the paper having corresponded sufficiently, though still rather discursively, to your expectations under that title, it is but natural that, on suddenly finding that he has plunged into Literary History generally, and is taking you with him through a survey of the whole of Greek Literature, in preparation for something else yet unforeseen, you should think that the thread has been lost. But lo! at the end, when you are just out of the wood, he is holding up the thread between his fingers, and half-persuading you that all through the wood he has kept it there. If *you* are but half-convinced, he is perhaps but half-convinced himself; but it is wise to say nothing. If you have had excellent entertainment from a paper, why quarrel with the fact that a good deal of it, or perhaps all the best of it, was not promised by the title? And this paper of De Quincey's does contain most excellent entertainment. It is entitled, I think, to rank among his supreme performances in the class to which it belongs. As a whole, it is one of those papers after reading which one can understand the feeling so common among De Quincey's admirers of former years, and which still sometimes finds expression, that the days of such magazine-writing are gone.

The shorter papers entitled *Language* and *Conversation* belong, by their subjects, to the same series as the two preceding. Though less important and elaborate, and containing indeed some repetitions of previous matter, they are valuable supplements, and extend the ground considerably in the different directions indicated by their titles. That on Conversation is perhaps the brisker in points of new interest, and the more De Quinceyish.

But what shall we say of the next paper, entitled *A Brief Appraisal of the Greek Literature in its Foremost Pretensions*, which was not republished by De Quincey himself in his Collective Edition of his Writings, and has had to be recovered from the old columns of *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, where it originally appeared in two instalments, the first in December 1838 and the second in June 1839? One thing we may

say for certain,—that no paper ever written by De Quincey is calculated to rouse more vehement resentment in high quarters. The cause of offence is mainly the peculiar doctrine of the paper. De Quincey's purpose in writing it having been, as he explains in the more extended form of the title given to it in the magazine, to offer "counsel to adults hesitating as to the propriety of studying the Greek Language with a view to the Literature," and at the same time "consolation to those whom circumstances have obliged to lay aside that plan," he set to work for this double purpose in a somewhat surprising fashion. Throughout the paper it is as if De Quincey, having come out of the Temple of Greek Literature, and having locked the door behind him, stood on the steps with the key in his hand, and addressed the little waiting crowd of would-be entrants thus :—"Gentlemen, the Greek Language is the finest and most perfect instrument of human thought on the face of the earth ; I have often said so, and I am still of that opinion. But the question now is about the Greek Literature. Well, I know what is within these walls, and pretty generally all that is within them ; and, if you will take my word for it, the Greek Literature, with some exceptions, is not up to the capabilities of the Greek Language. As far as *your* purposes are concerned, a great deal of what is best in it,—*e.g.* in History and in Philosophy,—may be had in translation ; and, for the rest,—*e.g.* in Poetry and Prose Eloquence,—I assure you that there is plenty of greater and nobler stuff in your own English tongue than can be found in the Greek. The single exception I would make in this last department is in favour of the Greek Tragic Poetry. You do lose something by not being able to read Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides in the original, and so to enjoy them as intimately as you may Shakespeare and Milton ; but for that there is ample compensation in the abundance and variety there is in English even if Shakespeare and Milton are taken away. And so, gentlemen, with this information,—which is different, I know, from what you expected, and for which, I know, I shall be called to account by my academic friends,—I bid you good-bye, and advise you to go home." To fill out this sketch of the doctrine of De Quincey's paper, readers will have to observe

what he says in it of some of the great Greek classics in particular. He does not exactly depreciate Homer,—far from it,—but he challenges the special character of *sublimity* usually attributed to Homer, averring that Milton infinitely transcends Homer in that quality, and adding that in some of Homer's real and most delightful characteristics Chaucer is more than his match; Pindar he dismisses with something like contempt; and, while reavowing his fond admiration of Herodotus, he decries Thucydides. The offence of the general doctrine of his paper is intensified by these particular applications of it. But, apart altogether from the doctrine of the paper, there is cause of offence in its manner and style. That fault of forced jocularity, and of resort to slang and vulgarism in the interest of such jocularity, which seems to have beset De Quincey now and then in his literary life, and most of all, I think, when he was writing for *Tait's Magazine*, is recklessly prominent in the first part of this *Brief Appraisal*. That cause of offence added to the other, the anger over the paper may well be vehement in the scholarly world. So much is this the case that it has been seriously suggested to me that the paper might be advantageously omitted altogether from the present Collective Edition of De Quincey's writings. That, however, would be unlawful. There is not a particle of evidence that De Quincey ever repented of the paper or wished it to be cancelled. Although it was not included in his own edition of his collected writings so far as he had carried that edition at his death, it is known that he had not then come to the end of his intended republications; and the present seems to have been one of the papers he was keeping in reserve. He may have contemplated revision of it; but there is no sign whatever of his having been disposed to retract its doctrine. On the contrary, he appears to have regarded his doctrine of the exaggerated estimation of the Greek Literature by most modern scholars with that kind of complacency with which an author regards any fixed idea of his that is still militant for acceptance. There are expressions of it in several others of his papers, earlier or later, which he did himself republish, and which have been included in our previous volumes; and there is open recurrence to it, with defence of it, in portions of two subsequent papers in

the present volume. On these grounds the paper must go forth again in this edition, for better or worse, as De Quincey left it. It may be useful from the reaction it will provoke, if from nothing else; but who knows whether it may not be of use also from some streaks of rough truth in its unpalatable candours?

Whatever else De Quincey exempted from his general depreciation of the Greek Literature below the customary academic estimate of its worth, he exempted most emphatically, as has just been said, the Greek Tragic Drama. With him, as with every man before him who knew what real literature is, the remains of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides were, as they will be to the end of time with all who have the same qualification, among the very highest and noblest things in the whole literature of the world. Hence a kind of incidental interest in the fact that the two articles which immediately succeed in the present volume have the Greek Tragic Drama for their subject. In that entitled *Theory of Greek Tragedy* we have not, indeed, De Quincey's views of those three great masters of the Greek Tragic Drama individually and in comparison with each other, but only an exposition of his notion of the ruling idea or characteristic of the Greek Tragic Drama generally, as distinguished from that which governs the modern, or English, or Shakespearian Tragedy. It is, however, a deep and subtle little essay, conveying a thought so peculiar that its full reach and significance will not appear till it has been further meditated. *The Antigone of Sophocles as Represented on the Edinburgh Stage* is in a more popular vein, and, though hurried at the close, is also an admirable essay. Occasioned by the appearance of Miss Helen Faucit (now Lady Martin) in the part of Antigone in an English adaptation of the Sophoclean drama, which, after having been acted in various other places, was produced in Edinburgh in December 1845, it consists partly of a criticism of the Edinburgh performance for contemporary local effect, but mainly of an explanation of the differences between the ancient stage and the modern, with a scholarly criticism of the attempted reproduction from that point of view. It is in this article that there will be found one of those reiterations by De Quincey of his somewhat defiant under-

estimate of the Greek Literature generally of which mention has been made above. It is in this article, moreover, that he expounds, more specifically perhaps than in any other, a principle which he held to be at the root of all Art, and the due apprehension of which would infallibly, he thought, guard against the vulgar habit of objecting to this or that in any artistic performance,—the solo-singing, say, of a martyr in an opera to the enraptured audience when he is about to be flung into the flames, or the action, say, of the supposed meeting of two lovers by their dancing approximation in a ballet,—that it is utterly *unnatural.* Goethe had fought valiantly against this vulgar misconception of the powers and liberties of Art ; but, even after Goethe's crushing thunderbolt of reply,—"Art is called Art simply because it is *not* Nature,"—De Quincey's ingenious suggestion to the same end, formulated by him in the words "*idem in alio,*" comes in helpfully.

In the rest of the volume we are again in a more modern element. The little Shakespearian paper *On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth* resembles the paper on the Theory of Greek Tragedy in so far as it propounds a notion which, though at first it may appear a mere subtlety of De Quincey's peculiar intellect, gradually dawns out with startling certainty as the exact truth needed for the case. The little paper entitled *On Milton,* and its appendages in the shape of a *Postscript* and of the scraps entitled *Question of Actual Slips in Milton* and *Dryden's Hexastich on Milton,* are welcome as a cluster of critical morsels respecting the poet to whose life and writings De Quincey was always reverting when he could, though neither to the life nor the writings was he ever able to devote the larger treatment which he had at one time intended. The reasons for the inclusion in this volume of the series of short miscellanies entitled *Notes from the Pocket-book of a late Opium-Eater,* so far as these are not obvious from the sub-titles of the articles individually, will be found in the Editorial note introducing the series.

D. M.

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LETTERS TO A YOUNG MAN WHOSE EDUCATION HAS BEEN NEGLECTED[1]

LETTER I

LITERATURE AND AUTHORSHIP[2]

My dear Sir,—When I had the pleasure of meeting you at Ch——, for the second time in my life, I was much concerned to remark the general dejection of your manner. I may now add that I was also much surprised; your cousin's visit to me having made it no longer a point of delicacy to suppress that feeling. General report had represented you as in possession of all which enters into the worldly estimate of happiness — great opulence, unclouded reputation, and freedom from unhappy connexions. That you had the priceless blessing of unfluctuating health I know upon your own authority. And the concurring opinions of your friends, together with my own opportunities for observation, left me no room to doubt that you wanted not the last and mightiest among the sources of happiness—a fortunate constitution of mind, both for moral and intellectual ends. So many blessings as these, meeting in the person of one man, and yet

[1] Published first in the *London Magazine* for January, February, March, May, and July 1823, with the words "By the Author of the Confessions of an English Opium-Eater" annexed to the title: reprinted, but not quite perfectly, in 1860, in the fourteenth and last volume of De Quincey's own edition of his Collected Writings.—M.

[2] There was no sub-title to Letter I. in the *London Magazine*; but the sub-titles to all the subsequent Letters are De Quincey's own.—M.

all in some mysterious way defeated and poisoned, presented a problem too interesting, both to the selfish and the generous curiosity of men, to make it at all wonderful that at that time and place you should have been the subject of much discussion. Now and then some solutions of the mystery were hazarded; in particular, I remember one from a young lady of seventeen, who said, with a positive air, "that Mr. M——'s dejection was well known to arise from an unfortunate attachment in early life,"—which assurance appeared to have great weight with some other young ladies of sixteen. But, upon the whole, I think that no account of the matter was proposed at the time which satisfied myself, or was likely to satisfy any reflecting person.

At length the visit of your cousin L——, in his road to Th——, has cleared up the mystery in a way more agreeable to myself than I could have ventured to anticipate from any communication short of that which should acquaint me with the entire dispersion of the dejection under which you laboured. I allow myself to call such a disclosure agreeable, partly upon the ground that, where the grief or dejection of our friends admits of no important alleviation, it is yet satisfactory to know that it may be traced to causes of adequate dignity; and, in this particular case, I have not only that assurance, but the prospect of contributing some assistance to your emancipation from these depressing recollections, by co-operating with your own efforts in the way you have pointed out for supplying the defects of your early education.

L—— explained to me all that your own letter had left imperfect; in particular, how it was that you came to be defrauded of the education to which even your earliest and humblest prospects had entitled you; by what heroic efforts, but how vainly, you laboured to repair that greatest of losses; what remarkable events concurred to raise you to your present state of prosperity; and all other circumstances which appeared necessary to put me fully in possession of your present wishes and intentions.

The two questions which you addressed to me through him I have answered below: these were questions which I could answer easily and without meditation; but, for the

main subject of our future correspondence, it is so weighty, and demands such close attention (as even *I* find, who have revolved the principal points almost daily for many years), that I would willingly keep it wholly distinct from the hasty letter which I am now obliged to write; on which account it is that I shall forbear to enter at present upon the series of letters which I have promised, even if I should find that my time were not exhausted by the answers to your *two questions below.*

To your first question,—Whether to you, with your purposes and at your age of thirty-two, a residence at either of our English universities, or at any foreign university, can be of much service?—my answer is, firmly and unhesitatingly, No. The majority of the undergraduates of your own standing, in an academic sense, will be your juniors by twelve or fourteen years; a disparity of age which could not but make your society mutually burthensome. What, then, is it that you would seek in a university? Lectures? These, whether public or private, are surely the very worst modes of acquiring any sort of accurate knowledge, and are just as much inferior to a good book on the same subject as that book hastily read aloud, and then immediately withdrawn, would be inferior to the same book left in your possession, and open at any hour, to be consulted, retraced, collated, and in the fullest sense studied. But, besides this, university lectures are naturally adapted, not so much to the general purpose of communicating knowledge, as to the specific purpose of meeting a particular form of examination for degrees, and a particular profession to which the whole course of the education is known to be directed. The two single advantages which lectures can ever acquire, to balance those which they forgo, are either: *first*, the obvious one of a better apparatus for displaying illustrative experiments than most students can command, — and the cases where this becomes of importance it cannot be necessary to mention; *second*, the advantage of a rhetorical delivery, when *that* is of any use (as in lectures on poetry, &c.) These, however, are advantages more easily commanded in a great capital than in the most splendid university. What, then, remains to a university, except its libraries? And with regard to

those the answer is short: to the greatest of them undergraduates have not free access; to the inferior ones (of their own college, &c.) the libraries of the great capitals are often equal or superior; and, for mere purposes of study, your own private library is far preferable to the Bodleian or the Vatican. To you, therefore, a university can offer no attraction except on the assumption that you see cause to adopt a profession; and, as a degree from some university would in that case be useful (and indispensable except for the bar), your determination on this first question must still be dependent on that which you form upon the second.

In this second question you call for my opinion upon the eleventh chapter of Mr. Coleridge's Biographia Literaria, as applied to the circumstances in which you yourself are placed.[1] This chapter, to express its substance in the most general terms, is a dissuasion from what Herder, in a passage there quoted, calls "Die Authorschaft"; or, as Mr. Coleridge expresses it, "the trade of authorship"; and the amount of the advice is,—that, for the sake of his own happiness and respectability, every man should adopt some trade or profession, and should make literature a subordinate pursuit. On this advice, I understand you to ask, *first*, whether it is naturally to be interpreted as extending to cases such as yours, and, *second*, if so, what is my judgment on such advice so extended? As to my judgment upon this advice, supposing it addressed to men of your age and situation, you will easily collect, from all which I shall say, that I think it as bad as can well be given.

Waiving this, however, and to consider your other question—in what sense, and with what restrictions, the whole chapter is to be interpreted—that is a point which I find it no easy matter to settle. Mr. Coleridge, who does not usually offend by laxity and indecision of purpose, has, in this instance, allowed the very objects of his advice to shift and fluctuate before him; and, from the beginning to the end, nothing is firmly constructed for the apprehension to grasp,

[1] Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* was originally published in 1817. The eleventh chapter of that book is entitled "An affectionate exhortation to those who in early life feel themselves disposed to become authors."—M.

nor are the grounds of judgment steadily maintained. From the title to the chapter (an affectionate exhortation to those who in early life feel themselves disposed to become authors), and from the express words of Herder in the passage cited from him as the final words of the chapter,—which words discountenance "authorship" only as "zu früh oder unmässig gebraucht" (practised too early, or with too little temperance),—it would have been a natural presumption that Mr. Coleridge's counsels regarded chiefly or altogether the case of very youthful authors, and the unfortunate thirst for premature distinction. And, if this had been the purpose of the chapter, excepting that the evil involved in such a case is not very great, and is generally intercepted by the difficulties which prevent, and overpunished by the mortifications which attend, any such juvenile acts of presumption, there could have been no room for differing with Mr. Coleridge, except upon the propriety of occupying his great powers with topics of such trivial interest. But this, though from the title it naturally should have been, is *not* the evil, or any part of it, which Mr. Coleridge is contemplating. What Mr. Coleridge really has in his view are two most different objections to literature, as the principal pursuit of life ; which, as I have said, continually alternate with each other as the objects of his arguments, and sometimes become perplexed together, though incapable of blending into any real coalition. The objections urged are : *First*, To literature considered as a means of livelihood ; as any part of the resources which a man should allow himself to rely on for his current income, or worldly credit and respectability. Here the evils anticipated by Mr. Coleridge are of a high and positive character, and such as tend directly to degrade the character, and indirectly to aggravate some heavy domestic evils. *Second*, To literature considered as a means of sufficiently occupying the intellect. Here the evil apprehended is an evil of defect. It is alleged that literature is not adequate to the main end of giving due and regular excitement to the mind and the spirits, unless combined with some other summons to mental exercise of periodical recurrence—determined by an overruling cause, acting from without—and not dependent therefore on the incidents of individual will, or the caprices of momentary

feeling springing out of temper or bodily health. Upon the last objection, as by far the most important in any case, and the only one at all applicable to yours, I would wish to say a word; because my thoughts on that matter are from the abundance of my heart, and drawn up from the very depths of my own experience. If there has ever lived a man who might claim the privilege of speaking with emphasis and authority on this great question,—By what means shall a man best support the activity of his own mind in solitude? —I probably am that man; and upon this ground,—that I have passed more of my life in absolute and unmitigated solitude, voluntarily, and for intellectual purposes, than any person of my age whom I have ever either met with, heard of, or read of. With such pretensions, what is it that I offer as the result of my experience, and how far does it coincide with the doctrine of Mr. Coleridge? Briefly this: —I wholly agree with him that Literature, in the proper acceptation of the term, as denoting what is otherwise called *Belles Lettres*, &c.—that is, the most eminent of the fine arts, and so understood, therefore, as to exclude all *science* whatsoever—is not, to use a Greek word, *αὐταρκης*,—is not self-sufficing; no, not even when the mind is so far advanced that it can bring what have hitherto passed for merely literary or *æsthetic* questions under the light of philosophic principles; when problems of "taste" have expanded to problems of human nature. And why? Simply for this reason,—that our power to exercise the faculties on such subjects is not, as it is on others, in defiance of our own spirits; the difficulties and resistances to our progress in these investigations are not susceptible of minute and equable partition (as in mathematics); and, therefore, the movements of the mind cannot be continuous, but are either of necessity tumultuary and *per saltum*, or none at all. When, on the contrary, the difficulty is pretty equally dispersed and broken up into a series of steps, no one of which demands any exertion sensibly more intense than the rest, nothing is required of the student beyond that sort of application and coherent attention which, in a sincere student of any standing, may be presumed as a habit already and inveterately established. The dilemma, therefore, to which a student of

pure literature is continually reduced — such a student, suppose, as the Schlegels, or any other man who has cultivated no acquaintance with the severer sciences—is this : either he studies literature as a mere man of taste, and perhaps also as a philologer—and in that case his understanding must find a daily want of some masculine exercise to call it out and give it play ; or (which is the rarest thing in the world), having begun to study literature as a philosopher, he seeks to renew that elevated walk of study at all opportunities,—but this is often as hopeless an effort as to a great poet it would be to sit down upon any predetermination to compose in his character of poet. Hence, therefore, if (as too often it happens) he has not cultivated those studies (mathematics, *e.g.*) which present such difficulties as will bend to a resolute effort of the mind, and which have the additional recommendation that they are apt to stimulate and irritate the mind to make that effort, he is often thrown by the very cravings of an unsatisfied intellect, and not by passion or inclination, upon some vulgar excitement of business or pleasure, which becomes constantly more necessary to him.

I should do injustice to myself if I were to say that I owed this view of the case solely to my own experience. The truth is, I easily foresaw, upon the suggestion almost of an instant, that literature would not suffice for my mind with my purposes. I foresaw this, and I provided for it from the very first ; but how ? *Not* in the way recommended by Mr. Coleridge, but according to a plan which you will collect from the letters I am to write, and which, therefore, I need not here anticipate. What, however, you will say (for *that* is the main inquiry),—what has been the success ? Has it warranted me to look back upon my past life, and to pronounce it upon the whole a happy one ? I answer in calmness, and with sincerity of heart, Yes. To you, with your knowledge of life, I need not say that it is a vain thing for any man to hope that he can arrive at my age without many troubles ; every man has his own, and more especially he who has not insulated himself in this world, but has formed attachments and connexions, and has thus multiplied the avenues through which his peace is assailable. But, setting aside these inevitable deductions, I assure you that the great

account of my days, if summed up, would present a great overbalance of happiness,—and of happiness, during those years which I lived in solitude, of necessity derived exclusively from intellectual sources. Such an evil, indeed, as time hanging heavy on my hands I never experienced for a moment. On the other hand, to illustrate the benefits of my plan by a picture of the very opposite plan, though pursued under the most splendid advantages, I would direct your eyes to the case of an eminent living Englishman, with talents of the first order, and yet, upon the evidence of all his works, ill-satisfied at any time either with himself or those of his own age. This Englishman set out in life, as I conjecture, with a plan of study modelled upon that of Leibnitz; that is to say, he designed to make himself (as Leibnitz most truly was) a *Polyhistor,* or catholic student. For this reason, and because at a very early age I had become familiar with the writings of Leibnitz, I have been often tempted to draw a parallel between that eminent German and the no less eminent Englishman of whom I speak.[1] In many things they agreed; these I shall notice at some other opportunity; only in general I will say that, as both had minds not merely powerful, but distinguished for variety and compass of power, so in both were these fine endowments completed and accomplished for works of Herculean endurance and continuity by the alliance of a bodily constitution resembling that of horses. They were centaurs, — heroic intellects with brutal capacities of body. What partiality in nature! In general, a man has reason to think himself well off in the great lottery of this life if he draws the prize of a healthy stomach without a mind, or the prize of a fine intellect with a crazy stomach; but that any man should draw both is truly astonishing, and, I suppose, happens only once in a century. Thus far (as indeed much further) they agreed. The points of difference were many, and not less remarkable. Two I shall allege as pertinent to the matter

[1] The "eminent Englishman" pointed at was no other than Coleridge himself. This, which would hardly appear from the covert manner in which he is here introduced for one purpose after having been spoken of at length for another, is proved by a subsequent allusion.—M.

before me. First, I remarked that Leibnitz, however anxious to throw out his mind upon the whole encyclopædia of human research, yet did not forget to pay the price at which only any *right* to be thus discursive can be earned. He sacrificed to the austerer muses. Knowing that God geometrizes eternally, he rightly supposed that in the universal temple Mathesis must furnish the master-key which would open most shrines. The Englishman, on the contrary, I remarked to have been too self-indulgent, and almost a voluptuary in his studies; sparing himself all toil, and thinking, apparently, to evade the necessity of artificial power by an extraordinary exertion of his own native power. Neither as a boy nor as a man had he submitted to any regular study or discipline of thought. His choice of subjects had lain too much amongst those dependent upon politics, or, rather, fleeting interests; and, when this had not happened, yet never amongst those which admitted of *continuous* thinking and study, and which support the spirits by perpetual influxes of pleasure, from the constant sense of success and difficulty overcome. As to the use of books, the German had been a discursive reader,—the Englishman a desultory reader.

Secondly, I remarked that Leibnitz was always cheerful and obliging, most courteous and communicative to his fellow-labourers in literature or science; with a single exception (which rests, I think, as the sole stain upon his memory), just, and even generously just, to the claims of others; uncensorious, and yet patient of censure; willing to teach, and most willing to be taught. Our English contemporary was not, I think, naturally less amiable than Leibnitz; and therefore I ascribe it to his unfortunate plan of study—leaving him, of necessity, too often with no subjects for intellectual exertion but such as cannot be pursued successfully, unless in a state of genial spirits—that we find him continually in ill-humour, distempered and untuned with uncharitable feelings; directing too harsh and acrimonious a spirit of criticism always against the age in which he lives, sometimes even against individuals; querulous[1] under criti-

[1] That this appears on the very face of his writings, may be inferred from a German work, published about two years ago, by a Hamburg barrister (I think)—Mr. Jacobs. The subject of the book is the

cism, almost to the extent of believing himself the object of conspiracies and organized persecution : finally (which to me is far the gloomiest part of the picture), he neither will consent to believe that any man of his own age (at least of his own country) can teach *him* anything,—professing all his obligations to those *who are dead*, or else to some rusty old German ; nor, finally, will he consent to teach others with the simple-minded magnanimity of a scholar, who should not seek to mystify and perplex his pupil, or to illuminate only with half-lights, nor put himself on his guard against his reader, as against a person seeking to grow as knowing as himself,—on the contrary, who should rejoice to believe, if he could believe it, that all the world knew as much as himself, and should adopt as his motto (which I make it my pride to have done from my earliest days) the simple grandeur of that line in Chaucer's description of *his* scholar :

"And gladly would he learn and gladly teach."

Such were the two features of difference which I had occasion perpetually to remark between two great scholars

Modern Literature of England, with the lives, &c., of the most popular authors. It is made up in a great measure from English literary journals, but not always ; and in the particular case of the author now alluded to, Mr. Jacobs imputes to him not merely too lively a sensitiveness to censure, but absolutely a "*wasserscheue*" (hydrophobia) with regard to reviewers and critics. How Mr. Jacobs came to use so strong an expression, or this particular expression, I cannot guess ; unless it were that he had happened to see (which, however, does not appear) in a work of this eloquent Englishman the following picturesque sentence : "By an unconscionable extension of the old adage, '*Noscitur a socio*,' my friends are never under the waterfall of criticism but I must be wet through with the spray." *Spray*, indeed ! I wish some of us knew no more of these angry cataracts than their spray. [Here Coleridge is distinctly pointed at as the "eminent Englishman" contrasted with Leibnitz in the text ; for the words "By an unconscionable extension," &c., are Coleridge's own, in Chapter III of his *Biographia Literaria*. The complete sentence there is, "Be it that by an unconscionable extension of the old adage, *noscitur a socio*, my literary friends are never under the waterfall of criticism but I must be wet through with the spray ; yet how came the torrent to descend upon *them*?" The friends particularly meant were Wordsworth and Southey.—M.]

in many other features so closely resembling each other. In general these two features would be thought to exist independently; but, with my previous theory of the necessity, in all cases, that with studies of so uncertain and even morbid an effect upon the spirits as literature should be combined some analytic exercise of *inevitable* healthy action, in this respect it was natural that *I* should connect them in my mind as cause and effect; and, in that view, they gave a double attestation to Mr. Coleridge's advice where it agrees with mine, and to mine where it differs from his.

Thus far I have considered Mr. Coleridge's advice simply as it respects the student. But the object of his studies is also entitled to some consideration. If it were better for the literary body that all should pursue a profession as their ἐργον (or business), and literature as a παρεργον (an accessary, or mere by-business), how far is literature itself likely to benefit by such an arrangement? Mr. Coleridge insists upon it that it will; and at page 225 he alleges seven names, to which at page 233 he adds an eighth, of celebrated men who have "shown the possibility of combining weighty performances in literature with full and independent employment." On various grounds it would be easy, I think, to cut down the list, as a list any way favourable for Mr. Coleridge's purpose, to one name, viz. that of Lord Bacon. But, waiving his examples, let us consider his arguments. The main business, the ἐργον, after exhausting a man's powers during the day, is supposed to leave three hours at night for the παρεργον. Now, we are to consider that our bright ideal of a literatus may chance to be married,—in fact, Mr. Coleridge agrees to allow him a wife. Let us suppose a wife, therefore; and the more so because else he will perhaps take one without our permission. I ask, then, what portion of these three hours is our student to give up to the pleasure of his wife's society? For, if a man finds pleasure in his wife's company at any time, I take it for granted that he would wish to spend the evening with her. Well, if you think so (says Mr. Coleridge, in effect, who had at first supposed the learned man to "retire into his study"), in fact he need *not* retire. How then? Why, he is to study, not in his study, but in his drawing-room, whilst "the social silence, or undisturbing

voices of a wife or sister, will be like a restorative atmosphere." Silence, by the way, is a strange mode of social pleasure. I know not what Mr. Coleridge does when he sits with a young woman; for my part, I do "mon possible" to entertain her, both with my wit and my wisdom; and am happy to hear *her* talk, even though she should chance to be my own wife; and never think of tolerating silence for one instant. But, not to quarrel about tastes, what is this "sister" that so pleasantly intrudes herself into the party? The wife I understand; but, in the north of England, or any place where I have lived, wives do not commonly present men with sisters, but with children. Suppose, then, our student's wife should give him a son; or, what is noisier, a daughter; or, what is noisier than either, both! What's to be done then? Here's a worshipful audience for a philosopher!—here's a promising company for "undisturbing voices" and "social silence"! I admire Mr. Coleridge's way of blinking this question, of masking this youthful battery with "a sister." Children, however, are incidents that do and will occur in this life, and must not be blinked. I have seen the case again and again; and I say it, and say it with pain, that there is no more respect for philosophy amongst that lively part of society than Mr. Coleridge and I have for French philosophy. They may, however, be banished to their nursery. True; but, if they are ever admitted to the drawing-room, in houses where not so much company is kept, I observe that this visit is most interesting to all parties in the evening; and, if they would otherwise be admitted, no good-natured student would wish to have their expulsion charged upon his books. After all, however, it is clear that Mr. Coleridge's voice is for the "retiring" system; and he gives us pretty plainly to understand (p. 230) that it is far better for men to be separated from their wives throughout the day. But, in saying this, he forgets that, in the case under consideration, the question is not so properly whether they are ever to be separated, as whether they are ever to meet. Indeed, taking what Mr. Coleridge says on the subject as addressed to literary men especially, I know not why they should be supposed likely to make unhappy marriages more than other men. They are not called upon to pass

more of their time with their wives than country gentlemen, or men generally without a profession. On the other hand, if we are to understand the words of Mr. Coleridge as of universal application, I hope that he gives us a very unfair view of the average tenor of life in this important particular. Yet, if it be settled that men will quarrel, and must quarrel, with their wives, or their wives with them, unless separated, would not a large screen meet the emergency? Or might not the learned man, as soon as breakfast is ended, bow to his wife and withdraw to his library, where he might study or be sulky according to his taste, leaving her for the rest of the day to amuse or to employ herself in the way most agreeable to her sex, rank, and previous education? But, in whatever way this difficulty may be disposed of, one point is clear to my judgment: that literature must decay unless we have a class *wholly* dedicated to that service,—not pursuing it as an amusement only, with wearied and preoccupied minds. The reproach of being a "*nation boutiquière*," now so eminently inapplicable to the English, would become indeed just, and in the most unfortunate sense just, if, from all our overstocked trades and professions, we could not spare men enough to compose a garrison on permanent duty for the service of the highest purposes which grace and dignify our nature.

You will not infer from all this any abatement in my old respect for Mr. Coleridge's great and various powers; no man admires them more. But there is no treason, I hope, in starting a little game now and then from the thickets of *The Friend*, the *Biographia Literaria*, or even from Mr. Coleridge's *Sermons*, considering that they are *Lay* ones. Young men must have some exercise this frosty weather. Hereafter I shall have occasion to break a lance with Mr. Coleridge on more difficult questions; and very happy I shall be if the amusement which I shall make it my business to strike out, by my hammering, from the flinty rock of his metaphysics, should either tempt any one to look into his valuable writings, or should tempt Mr. Coleridge to sally out of his hiding-place into a philosophic passion, and to attack me with the same freedom. Such an exhibition must be amusing to the public. I conceive that two transcendentalists,

who are also two ——s,[1] can hardly ever before have stripped in any ring. But, by the way, I wish he would leave transcendentalism to me and other young men ; for, to say the truth, it does not prosper in his hands. *I* will take charge of the public principles in that point, and he will thus be more at leisure to give us another *Ancient Mariner* ; which, I will answer for it, the whole literary body would receive with gratitude and a fervent "plaudite."—Yours, most faithfully, X. Y. Z.

Dec. 24, 1824.

LETTER II

OUTLINE OF THE WORK : NOTICE OF FORMER WRITERS ON THE SAME SUBJECT

My dear M.—In this my second and last letter of preface, I shall settle the idea and the arrangement of my papers. There will be in all about seven, of which four will exhibit the material on which the student is to work, the other three the tools with which the workmanship is to be conducted. First, *what* is to be done, and, secondly, *how*—is the natural and obvious distribution of the work ; that is to say, the business is to assign, first, the end, and, secondly, the means. And, because the end should reasonably determine the means, it would seem natural that, in the arrangement of the work, all which relates to *that* should have precedency. Nevertheless, I mean to invert this order, and for the following reason :—All that part of the means which are so entirely determined by the end as to presuppose its full and circumstantial development may be concluded specially restricted to that individual end. In proportion to this restriction they will, therefore, be of narrow application, and are best treated in direct connexion, and concurrently with the object to which they are thus appropriated. On the other hand, those means or instruments of thought which

[1] The word for filling up the blank must, doubtless, be "opium-eaters."—M.

are sufficiently complex and important to claim a separate attention to themselves are usually of such large and extensive use that they belong indifferently to all schemes of study, and may safely be premised in any plan, however novel in its principles or peculiar in its tendencies. What are these general instruments of study? According to my view they are three:—first, Logic; secondly, Languages; thirdly, Arts of Memory. With respect to these, it is not necessary that any special end should be previously given. Be his end what it may, every student must have thoughts to arrange, knowledge to transplant, and facts to record. Means which are thus universally requisite may safely have precedency of the end; and it will not be a preposterous order if I dedicate my first three letters to the several subjects of Logic, Languages, and Arts of Memory,—which will compose one half of my scheme, leaving to the other half the task of unfolding the course of study for which these instruments will be available.

Having thus settled the arrangement, and implicitly, therefore, settled in part the idea or *ratio* of my scheme, I shall go on to add what may be necessary to confine your expectations to the right track, and prevent them from going above or below the true character of the mark I aim at. I profess, then, to attempt something much higher than merely directions for a course of reading. Not that such a work might not be of eminent service; and in particular at this time, and with a constant adaptation to the case of rich men, not literary, I am of opinion that no more useful book could be executed than a series of letters (addressed, for example, to country gentlemen, merchants, &c.) on the formation of a library. The uses of such a treatise, however, are not those which I contemplate; for, either it would presume and refer to a plan of study already settled—and in that light it is a mere complement of the plan I propose to execute—or else it would attempt to *involve* a plan of study in the course of reading suggested; and *that* would be neither more nor less than to do *in concreto* what it is far more convenient, as well as more philosophical, to do (as I am now going to do) directly and *in abstracto*. A mere course of reading, therefore, is much below what I propose; on the other hand, an

organon of the human understanding is as much above it. Such a work is a labour for a life; that is to say, though it may take up but a small part of every day, yet could it in no other way accumulate its materials than by keeping the mind everlastingly on the watch to seize upon such notices as may arise daily throughout a life under the favour of accident or occasion. Forty years are not too large a period for such a work; and my present work, however maturely meditated, must be executed with rapidity. Here, in fact, I do but sketch or trace in outline (ὡς ἐν τυπῳ περιλαβειν) what there it would become my duty to develop, to fill up in detail, to apply, and to illustrate on the most extensive scale.

After having attempted in my first part to put you in possession of the best method for acquiring the *instruments* of study, and, with respect to logic in particular, having directed a philosophic light upon its true meaning and purpose, with the hope of extinguishing that anarchy of errors which have possessed this ground from the time of Lord Bacon to the moment at which I write,—I then, in the second division, address myself to the question of *ends*. Upon which word let me distinguish: upon ends, in an absolute sense, as ultimate ends, it is presumption in any man to offer counsel to another of mature age. Advice of that sort, given under whatever hollow pretences of kindness, is to be looked upon as arrogance in the most repulsive shape, and to be rejected with that sort of summary disdain which any man not of servile nature would testify towards him who should attempt to influence his choice of a wife. A student of mature age must be presumed to be best acquainted with his own talents and his own intellectual infirmities, with his "forte" and his "foible," with his own former experience of failure or success, and with the direction in which his inclinations point. Far be it from me to violate by the spirit of my counsels a pride so reasonable,—which, in truth, I hold sacred. My scheme takes an humbler ground. *Ends*, indeed, in a secondary sense, the latter half professes to deal with; but such ends as, though bearing that character in relation to what is purely and merely instrumental, yet again become *means* in relation to ends absolutely so called. The

final application of your powers and knowledge it is for yourself only to determine ; my pretensions in regard to that election are limited to this,—that I profess to place you on a vantage-ground from which you may determine more wisely, by determining from a higher point of survey. My purpose is not to map the whole course of your journey, but to serve as your guide to that station at which you may be able to lay down your future route for yourself. The former half of my work I have already described to you ; the latter half endeavours to construct such a system of study as shall combine these two advantages : 1, Systematic unity ; that is, such a principle of *internal* connexion as that the several parts of the plan shall furnish assistance interchangeably. 2, The largest possible compass of *external* relations. Some empires, you know, are built for growth ; others are essentially impregressive, but are built for duration, on some principle of strong internal cohesion. Systems of knowledge, however, and schemes of study, should propose both ends : they should take their foundations broad and deep,

"And lay great bases for eternity"—

which is the surest key to internal and systematic connexion ; and, secondly, they should provide for future growth and accretion, regarding all knowledge as a nucleus and centre of accumulation for other knowledge. It is on this latter principle, by the way, that the system of education in our public schools, however otherwise defective, is justly held superior to the specious novelties of our suburban academies ; for it is more radical, and adapted to a larger superstructure. Such, I say, is the character of my scheme ; and by the very act of claiming for it, as one of its benefits, that it leaves you in the *centre* of large and comprehensive relations to other parts of knowledge, it is pretty apparent that I do not presume to suggest in what direction of these manifold relations you should afterwards advance. *That*, as I have now sufficiently explained, will be left to your own self-knowledge, but to your self-knowledge illumined at the point where I leave you by that other knowledge which my scheme of study professes to communicate.

From this general outline of my own plan, I am led by

an easy transition to a question of yours, respecting the merits of the most celebrated amongst those who have trod the same ground in past times. Excepting only a little treatise of Erasmus, *De Ratione Studii*, all the essays on this subject by eminent continental writers appeared in the seventeenth century; and, of these, a large majority before the year 1640. They were universally written in Latin; and, the Latin of that age being good, they are so far agreeable to read: beyond this, and the praise of elegance in their composition and arrangement, I have not much to say in their behalf. About the year 1645, Lewis Elzevir published a *corpus* of these essays, amounting in all to four-and-twenty. In point of elegance and good sense, their merits are various; thus far they differ; but, in regard to the main point, they hold a lamentable equality of pretension—being all thoroughly hollow and barren of any practical use.[1] I cannot give you a better notion of their true place and relation to the class of works which you are in search of than by an analogy drawn from the idea of didactic poetry, as it exists in the Roman literature and our own. So thoroughly is this sometimes misunderstood that I have seen it insisted on as a merit in a didactic poem that the art which it professed to deliver might be learned and practised in all its technicalities without other assistance than that which the poem supplied.

[1] Not for the sake of any exception in its favour from the general censure here pronounced on this body of essays, but for its extraordinary tone of passion and frantic energy, and at times of noble sentiment eloquently expressed, I must notice, as by far the most memorable of these essays of the seventeenth century, that of Joachim Forz Ringelberg, *On the Method of Study* (De Ratione Studii). It is one of those books which have been written most evidently not merely by a madman (as many thousands have), but by a madman under a high paroxysm of his malady; and, omitting a few instances of affectation and puerility, it is highly affecting. It appears that the author, though not thirty years of age at the date of his book, was afflicted with the gravel — according to his belief, incurably; and much of the book was actually written in darkness (on waxen tablets, or on wooden tablets, with a *stylus* formed of charred bones), during the sleepless nights of pain consequent upon his disease. "Ætas abiit," says he, "reditura nunquam — Ah! nunquam reditura! Tametsi annum nunc solum trigesimum ago, spem tamen ademit calculi morbus." ["The time has gone, never to return—ah! never to return! Though I am now only in my thirtieth year, the disease of

But, had this been true, so far from being a praise, it would instantly have degraded the poem from its rank as a work among the products of Fine Art; *ipso facto*, such a poem would have settled down from that high intellectual rank into the ignoble pretensions of mechanic art, in which the metre, and the style which metre introduces, would immediately have lost their justification. The true idea of didactic poetry is this:—Either the poet selects an art which furnishes the *occasion* for a series of picturesque exhibitions (as Virgil, Dyer, &c.); and in that case it is true that he derives part of his power from the art which he delivers,—not, however, from what is essential to the art, but from its accidents and adjuncts: either he does this, or else (as is the case with Lord Roscommon, Pope, &c.), so far from seeking in his subject for any part of his *power*, he seeks in *that* only for the *resistance* with which he contends by means of the power derived from the verse and the artifices of style. To one case or other of this alternative all didactic poems are reducible; and, allowing for the differences of rhetoric and poetry, the same ideal must have presided in the composition of the various essays of the seventeenth century addressed to students. The subject was felt to be austere and unattractive, and almost purely scholastic; it was the ambition of the writers, therefore, to show that they could present it in a graceful shape, and that under their treatment the subject

the stone has taken all hope from me."] And again: "Sic interim meditantem calculi premunt ut gravi ipsa dolore mœreat mens, et plerumque noctes abducat insomnes angor." ["While I am thus meditating my disease is so hard on me that my mind itself suffers under the heavy pain, and generally my nights are sleepless with anguish."] Towards the end it is that he states the remarkable circumstances under which the book was composed. "Bonam partem libri hujus in tenebris scripsi, quando somnus me ob calculi dolorem reliquerat; idque quum sol adversa nobis figeret vestigia, nocte vagante in medio cœlo. Deerat lumen; verum tabulas habeo, quibus etiam in tenebris utor." ["I have written a good part of this book in darkness, when sleep had left me from the pain of my disease, and that when the sun's footsteps were away from us and night was wandering in the mid-heaven. Light was wanting; but I have tablets, which I use even in the dark."] It is singular that so interesting a book should nowhere have been noticed, to my knowledge, in English literature, except, indeed, in a slight and inaccurate way, by Dr. Vicesimus Knox, in his *Winter Evening Lucubrations* [1788].

might become interesting to the reader as an arena upon which skill was exhibited, baffling or evading difficulties, even at the price of all benefit to the anxious and earnest disciple. *Spartam nactus es*, was their motto, *hanc exorna*[1]; and, like Cicero, in his Idea of an Orator, with relation to the practical duties, or Lord Shaftesbury, with relation to the accurate knowledge of the academic philosophy, they must be supposed deliberately to have made a *selection* from the arts or doctrines before them, for the sake of a beautiful composition which should preserve all its parts in harmony, and only secondarily (if at all) to have regarded the interests of the student. By all of them the invitation held out was not so much *Indocti discant*, as *Ament meminisse periti.*

In our own country there have been numerous "letters," &c., on this interesting subject; but not one that has laid any hold on the public mind except the two works of Dr. Watts, especially that upon the "Improvement of the Mind."[2] Being the most imbecile of books, it must have owed its success—1, To the sectarian zeal of his party in religion,—his fellows and his followers; 2, To the fact of its having gained for its author, from two Scotch universities, the highest degree they could bestow; 3, To the distinguished honour of having been adopted as a lecture-book (q. as an examination-book?) by both English universities; 4, To the extravagant praise of Dr. Johnson, amongst whose infirmities it was to praise warmly when he was flattered by the sense of his own great superiority in powers and knowledge. Dr. Johnson supposes it to have been modelled on Locke's Conduct of the Understanding; but surely this is as ludicrous as to charge upon Silence any elaborate imitation of Mr. Justice Shallow. That Silence may have borrowed from another man half of a joke, or echoed the roar of his laughter, is possible; but of any more grave or laborious attempts to rob he stands ludicrously acquitted by the exemplary imbecility of his nature. No;

[1] "You have come into possession of a Sparta: make the most of it."—M.

[2] Dr. Isaac Watts's *Logic, or the Right Use of Reason*, was published in 1725; his *Improvement of the Mind, or Supplement to the Art of Logic*, in 1741.—M.

Dr. Watts did *not* steal from Mr. Locke; in matters of dulness a man is easily original; and I suppose that even Feeble or Shallow might have had credit for the effort necessary to the following counsels, taken at random from Dr. Watts, at the page where the book has happened to fall open.

1. Get a distinct and comprehensive knowledge of the subject which you treat of; survey it on all sides, and make yourself perfect master of it; then (then! what then?—Think of Feeble making an inference. Well, "then") you will have all the sentiments that relate to it in your view; 2. Be well skilled in the language which you speak; 3. Acquire a variety of words, a *copia verborum*. Let your memory be rich in synonymous terms.—p. 228, edit. 1817.

Well done, most magnanimous Feeble! Such counsels I suppose that any man might have produced, and you will not wish to see criticised. Let me rather inquire what common defect it is which has made the works of much more ingenious men, and in particular that of Locke, utterly useless for the end proposed. The error in these books is the same which occurs in books of ethics, and which has made them more or less useless for any practical purpose. As it is important to put an end to all delusion in matters of such grave and general concern as the improvement of our understandings, or the moral valuation of actions, and as I repeat that the delusion here alluded to has affected both equally (so far as they can be affected by the books written professedly to assist them), it may be worth while to spend a few lines in exposing it. I believe that you are so far acquainted with the structure of a syllogism as to know how to distinguish between the major and minor proposition; there is, indeed, a technical rule which makes it impossible to err; but you will have no need of *that*, if you once apprehend the *rationale* of a syllogism in the light under which I will here place it. In every syllogism one of the two premises (the major) lays down a rule, under which rule the other (the minor) brings the subject of your argument as a particular case. The minor is, therefore, distinguished from the major by an act of the *judgment*,—namely, a subsumption of a special case under a rule. Now, consider how this applies

to morals: here the conscience supplies the general rule, or major proposition, and about this there is no question; but, to bring the special case of conduct which is the subject of your inquiry under this general rule,—here first commences the difficulty, and just upon this point are ethical treatises for the most part silent. Accordingly, no man thinks of consulting them for his direction under any moral perplexities; if he reads them at all, it is for the gratification of his understanding in surveying the order and relation amongst the several members of a system; never for the information of his moral judgment.

For any practical use in that way, a *casuistry*,—that is, a subsumption of the *cases* most frequently recurring in ordinary life,—should be combined with the system of moral principles[1]: the latter supplying the major (or normal) proposition; the former supplying the minor proposition, which brings the special case under the rule. With the help of this explanation, you will easily understand on what principle I venture to denounce, as unprofitable, the whole class of books written on the model of Locke's *Conduct of the Understanding*. According to Locke, the student is not to hurry, but again not to loiter; not to be too precipi-

[1] Accordingly, our fashionable moral practitioner for this generation, Dr. Paley, who prescribes for the consciences of both universities, and, indeed, of most respectable householders, has introduced a good deal of casuistry into his work, though not under that name. In England there is an aversion to the mere name, founded partly on this,—that casuistry has been most cultivated by Roman Catholic divines, and too much with a view to an indulgent and dispensing morality; and partly on the excessive subdivision and hair-splitting of cases; which tends to the infinite injury of morals, by perplexing and tampering with the conscience, and by presuming morality to be above the powers of any but the subtlest minds. All this, however, is but the abuse of casuistry; and without casuistry of some sort or other no practical decision could be made in the accidents of daily life. Of this, on a fitter occasion, I could give a cumulative proof. Meantime let it suffice to observe that law, which is the most practical of all things, is a perpetual casuistry; in which an immemorial usage, a former decision of the court, or positive statute, furnishes the major proposition, and the judgment of the jury, enlightened by the knowledge of the bench, furnishes the minor or casuistical proposition. [The vein of thought in this footnote and in the text to which it appertains reappears in subsequent writings of De Quincey —*e.g.* in his *Essay on Casuistry*: see *ante*, Vol. VIII.—M.]

tate, nor yet too hesitating; not to be too confiding, but far less too suspicious; not too obstinate in his own opinions, yet again (for the love of God!) not too resigned to those of others; not too general in his divisions, but (as he regards his own soul) not too minute, &c. &c.

But surely no man bent on the improvement of his faculties was ever guilty of these errors under these names, that is, knowingly and deliberately. If he is so at all, it is either that he has not reflected on his own method, or that, having done so, he has allowed himself in the act or habit, offending these rules on a false view of its tendency and character; because, in fact, having adopted as his rule (or major) that very golden mean which Mr. Locke recommends, and which, without Mr. Locke's suggestion, he would have adopted for himself, it has yet been possible for him, by an erroneous judgment, to take up an act or habit under the rule which with better advice he would have excluded; which advice is exactly what Mr. Locke has—*not* given. Over and above all this, the method of the book is aphoristic, and, as might be expected from that method, without a plan; which is partly the cause and partly the consequence of having a plan without foundation.

This word *foundation* leads me to one remark suggested by your letter; and with that I shall conclude my own. When I spoke above of the student's taking his foundations broad and deep, I had my eye chiefly on the corner-stones of strong-built knowledge: namely, on logic; on a proper choice of languages; on a particular part of what is called metaphysics; and on mathematics. Now, you allege (I suppose upon occasion of my references to mathematics in my last letter) that you have no "genius" for mathematics; and you speak with the usual awe (*pavor attonitorum*) of the supposed "profundity" of intellect necessary to a great progress in this direction. Be assured that you are in utter error, though it be an error all but universal. In mathematics, upon two irresistible arguments which I shall set in a clear light when I come to explain the procedure of the mind with regard to that sort of evidence and that sort of investigation, there can be no subtlety; all minds are levelled, except as to the rapidity of the course; and, from the entire

absence of all those acts of mind which do really imply profundity of intellect, it is a question whether an idiot might not be made an excellent mathematician. Listen not to the romantic notions of the world on this subject; above all, listen not to mathematicians. Mathematicians, as *mathematicians*, have no business with the question. It is one thing to understand mathematics; another, and far different, to understand the philosophy of mathematics. With respect to this, it is memorable that in no one of the great philosophical questions which the ascent of mathematics has from time to time brought up above the horizon of our speculative view, has any mathematician who was merely such (however eminent) had depth of intellect adequate to its solution. Without insisting on the absurdities published by mathematicians on the philosophy of the *infinite* since that notion was introduced into mathematics, or on the fruitless attempts of all but a metaphysician to settle the strife between the conflicting modes of valuing *living forces*,—I need only ask what English or French mathematician has been able to exhibit the notion of *negative quantities* in a theory endurable even to a popular philosophy, or which has commanded any assent? Or, again, what Algebra is there existing which does not contain a false and ludicrous account of the procedure in that science, as contrasted with the procedure in Geometry? But, not to trouble you with more of these cases so opprobrious to mathematicians, lay this to heart,—that mathematics are very easy and very important; they are, in fact, the organ of one large division of human knowledge. And, as it is of consequence that you should lose no time by waiting for my letter on that subject, let me forestall so much of it as to advise that you would immediately commence with Euclid; reading those eight books of the Elements which are usually read, and the Data. If you should go no further, so much geometry will be useful and delightful; and so much, by reading for two hours a day, you will easily accomplish in about thirteen weeks,—*i.e.* one quarter of a year.—Yours, most truly,

X. Y. Z.

LETTER III

ON LANGUAGES

My dear Sir,—In my three following letters I am to consider, 1st, Languages, 2d, Logic, Arts of Memory; not as parts of knowledge sought or valued on their own account, but simply as the most general amongst the means and instruments of the student, — estimated therefore with a reference to the number and importance of the *ends* which they further, and fairly to be presumed in all schemes of self-improvement liberally planned. In this letter I will speak of languages; my thoughts, and a twenty years' experience as a student, having furnished me with some hints that may be useful in determining your choice, where choice is at first sight so difficult, and the evils of an erroneous choice so great. On this Babel of an earth which you and I inhabit, there are said to be about three thousand languages and jargons. Of nearly five hundred you will find a specimen in the *Mithridates* of Adelung,[1] and in some other German works of more moderate bulk.[2] The final purposes of this vast engine for separating nations it is not difficult in part to perceive; and it is presumable that those purposes have been nearly fulfilled; since there can be little doubt that within the next two centuries all the barbarous languages of the earth (that is, those without a literature) will be one after one strangled and exterminated by four European languages,—namely, the English, the Spanish, the Portuguese, and the Russian. Central Africa, and *that* only, can resist the momentum of civilisation for a longer period. Now, languages are sometimes studied, not as a key to so many bodies of literature, but as an object *per se*, — for

[1] John Christopher Adelung, German philologist, 1732-1806.—M.

[2] Especially one, whose title I forget, by Vater, the editor and completer of the *Mithridates*, after Adelung's death. [John Severein Vater, 1771-1826.—M.] By the way, for the sake of the merely English reader, it may be well to mention that the *Mithridates* is so called with an allusion to the great king of that name contemporary with Sylla, Lucullus, &c., of whom the tradition was that, in an immense and polyglot army, composed from a great variety of nations, he could talk to every soldier in his own language.

example, by Sir William Jones, Dr. Leyden, &c.[1]; and, where the researches are conducted with the enthusiasm and the sagacity of the late extraordinary Professor of Oriental Languages in Edinburgh, Dr. Alexander Murray, it is impossible to withhold one's admiration; *he* had a theory, and distinct purposes, which shed light upon paths that are else "as dark as Erebus."[2] Such labours conducted in such a spirit must be important, if the eldest records of the human race be important; for the affinities of language furnish the main clue for ascending, through the labyrinths of nations, to their earliest origins and connexions. To a professed linguist, therefore, the natural advice would be:—Examine the structure of as many languages as possible; gather as many thousand specimens as possible into your *hortus siccus*, beginning with the eldest forms of the Teutonic,—namely, the Visigothic and the Icelandic,—for which the aids rendered by modern learning are immense. To a professed philologist, I say, the natural advice would be this. But to you, who have no such purposes, and whom I suppose to wish for languages simply as avenues to literature not otherwise accessible, I will frankly say:—Start from this principle—that the act of learning a language is in itself an evil; and so frame your selection of languages that the largest possible body of literature *available for your purposes* shall be laid open to you at the least possible price of time and mental energy squandered in this direction. I say this with some

[1] Sir William Jones, orientalist, 1746-1794; John Leyden, poet and scholar, 1775-1811.—M.

[2] Alexander Murray, born 1775, son of a Galloway shepherd; a self-taught linguist in his youth; completed his education at the University of Edinburgh; lived for a while by literary employment; edited Bruce's *Travels in Abyssinia*; settled in 1806 in Urr, in Kirkcudbrightshire, as minister of that parish; was appointed Professor of Oriental Languages in the University of Edinburgh in 1812; and died in 1813, in the thirty-eighth year of his age, after having held that academic post for a single session. He had published in 1812 *Outlines of Oriental Philology*; and he left for posthumous publication *A History of European Languages: or Researches into the Affinities of the Teutonic, Greek, Celtic, Slavonic, and Indian Nations*. A most interesting and intimate account of this remarkable man will be found in the Memoirs of the famous Archibald Constable of Edinburgh published by his son Thomas Constable in 1873.—M.

earnestness. For I will not conceal from you that one of the habits most unfavourable to the growth and sincere culture of the intellect in our day is the facility with which men surrender themselves to the barren and ungenial labour of language-learning. Unless balanced by studies that give more exercise, more excitement, and more aliment to the faculties, I am convinced, by all I have observed, that this practice is the dry rot of the human mind. How should it be otherwise? The act of learning a science is good, not only for the knowledge which results, but for the exercise which attends it; the energies which the learner is obliged to put forth are true intellectual energies, and his very errors are full of instruction. He fails to construct some leading idea, or he even misconstructs it; he places himself in a false position with respect to certain propositions; views them from a false centre; makes a false or an imperfect antithesis; apprehends a definition with insufficient rigour; or fails in his use of it to keep it self-consistent. These and a thousand other errors are met by a thousand appropriate resources—all of a true intellectual character; comparing, combining, distinguishing, generalizing, subdividing, acts of abstraction and evolution, of synthesis and analysis, until the most torpid minds are ventilated, and healthily excited by this introversion of the faculties upon themselves.

But in the study of language (with an exception, however, to a certain extent, in favour of Latin and Greek, which I shall notice hereafter) nothing of all this can take place, and for one simple reason—that all is arbitrary. Wherever there is a law and system, wherever there is relation and correspondence of parts, the intellect will make its way—will interfuse amongst the dry bones the blood and pulses of life, and create "a soul under the ribs of death." But whatsoever is arbitrary and conventional—which yields no reason why it should be this way rather than that, obeying no theory or law—must, by its lifeless forms, kill and mortify the action of the intellect. If this be true, it becomes every student to keep watch upon himself that he does not, upon any light temptation, allow himself an overbalance of study in this direction; for the temptations to such an excess, which in our days are more powerful than formerly, are at all times

too powerful. Of all the weapons in the armoury of the scholar, none is so showy or so captivating to commonplace minds as skill in languages. *Vanity* is, therefore, one cause of the undue application to languages. A second is the national *fashion*. What nation but ourselves ever made the language of its eternal enemy an essential part of even a decent education?[1] What should we think of Roman policy, if, during the Second Punic War, the Carthaginian language had been taught as a matter of course to the children of every Roman citizen? But a third cause, which I believe has more efficacy than either of the former, is mere *levity*—the simple fact of being unballasted by any sufficient weight of plan or settled purpose to present a counterpoise to the slightest momentum this way or that, arising from any impulse of accident or personal caprice. When there is no resistance, a breath of air will be sufficient to determine the motion. I remember once that, happening to spend an autumn in Ilfracombe, on the west coast of Devonshire, I found all the young ladies whom I knew busily employed on the study of marine botany. On the opposite shore of the channel, in all the South Welsh ports of Tenby, &c., they were no less busy upon conchology: in neither case from any previous love of the science, but simply availing themselves of their local advantages. Now, here a man must have been truly ill-natured to laugh; for the studies were in both instances beautiful. A love for it was created, if it had not pre-existed; and, to women and young women, the very absence of all austere unity of purpose and self-determination was becoming and graceful. Yet, when this same levity and liability to casual impulses come forward in the acts and purposes of a man, I must own that I have often been unable to check myself in something like a contemptuous feeling; nor should I wish to check myself, but for remembering how many men of energetic minds constantly give way to slight and inadequate motives, simply for want of

[1] See the advertisements of the humblest schools; in which, however low the price of tuition, &c., is fixed, French never fails to enter as a principal branch of the course of study. To which fact I may add that even twelve or fifteen years ago I have seen French circulating libraries in London, chiefly supported by people in a humble rank.

being summoned to any anxious reviews of their own conduct. How many cases have I known where a particular study—as, suppose, of the Hartleian philosophy — was pursued throughout a whole college simply because a man of talents had talked of it in the junior common-room? How many where a book became popular because it had been mentioned in the House of Commons? How many where a man resolved to learn Welsh because he was spending a month or two at Barmouth? or Italian because he had found a Milan series of the poets in his aunt's library? or the violin because he had bought a fine one at an auction?

In 1808-9 you must well remember what a strong impulse the opening of the Peninsular War communicated to our current literature. The presses of London and the provinces teemed with editions of Spanish books, dictionaries, and grammars; and the motions of the British armies were accompanied by a corresponding activity among British compositors. From the just interest which is now renewed in Spanish affairs, I suppose something of the same scene will recur. Now, for my own part, though undoubtedly I would, for the sake of Calderon alone (judging of him through a German translation), most willingly study the Spanish literature (if I had leisure), yet I should be ashamed to do so upon the irrelevant and *occasional* summons of an interesting situation in Spanish affairs. I should feel that by such an act I confessed a want of preoccupation in my mind, a want of self-origination in my plans, an inertness of will, which, above all things, I do and ought to detest. If it were right for me (right, I mean, in relation to my previous scheme of study) to have dedicated a portion of my life to the Spanish literature, it must have been right before the Spanish politics took an interesting aspect. If it were not right, it could not become so upon a suggestion so purely verbal as the recurrence of the word Spanish in the London journals.

This, I am sure, you will interpret candidly. I am not supposing you less furnished with powers of self-determination than myself. I have no personal allusion or exception; but I suppose every man liable to be acted on unduly, or by inadequate impulses, so long as he is not possessed by some plan that may steady that levity of nature which is implied

in the mere state of indifference to all settled plans. This levity, in our days, meets with an accidental ally in the extraordinary facilities for studying languages in the shape of elementary books; which facilities of themselves form a fourth cause of the disproportionate study given to languages. But a fifth cause occurs to me, of a less selfish and indolent character than any of the preceding; and, as it seems to me hardly possible that it should not influence you more or less to make your choice of languages too large and comprehensive, I shall tell you, from my own case, what may be sufficient to set you on your guard against too much indulgence to a feeling in itself just and natural. In my youthful days, I never entered a great library, suppose of one hundred thousand volumes, but my predominant feeling was one of pain and disturbance of mind, — not much unlike that which drew tears from Xerxes, on viewing his immense army, and reflecting that in one hundred years not one soul would remain alive. To me, with respect to the books, the same effect would be brought about by my own death. Here, said I, are one hundred thousand books, the worst of them capable of giving me some pleasure and instruction; and before I can have had time to extract the honey from one-twentieth of this hive, in all likelihood I shall be summoned away. This thought, I am sure, must have often occurred to yourself; and you may judge how much it was aggravated when I found that, subtracting all merely professional books—books of reference, as dictionaries, &c. &c. &c.—from the universal library of Europe, there would still remain a total of not less than twelve hundred thousand books over and above what the presses of Europe are still disemboguing into the ocean of literature, many of them immense folios or quartos. Now, I had been told by an eminent English author, that, with respect to one single work, namely, the History of Thuanus, a calculation had been made by a Portuguese monk, which showed that barely to read over the words (and allowing no time for reflection) would require three years' labour, at the rate of (I think) three hours a day.[1] Further, I had myself

[1] Jacques Auguste de Thou (Latinised *Thuanus*), French lawyer and historian, 1553-1617. His *Historia sui Temporis* (History of his own Time), begun in 1593, was not completely published till 1620, when it consisted of 138 books.—M.

ascertained that to read a duodecimo volume, in prose, of four hundred pages — all skipping being barred, and the rapid reading which belongs to the vulgar interest of a novel —was a very sufficient work for one day. Consequently, three hundred and sixty-five per annum—that is (with a very small allowance for the claims of life on one's own account and that of one's friends), one thousand for every triennium ; that is, ten thousand for thirty years—will be as much as a man who lives for that only can hope to accomplish. From the age of twenty to eighty, therefore—if a man were so unhappy as to live to eighty—the utmost he could hope to travel through would be twenty thousand volumes, — a number not, perhaps, above *five per cent* of what. the mere *current* literature of Europe would accumulate in that period of years. Now, from this amount of twenty thousand make a deduction on account of books of larger size, books to be studied and books to be read slowly and many times over (as all works in which the composition is a principal part of their pretensions),—allow a fair discount for such deductions, and the twenty thousand will perhaps shrink to eight or five thousand. All this arithmetical statement you must not conceive to relate to any fanciful case of misery. No ; I protest to you that I speak of as real a case of suffering as ever can have existed. And it soon increased ; for the same panic seized upon me with respect to the works of art. I found that I had no chance of hearing the twenty-five thousandth part of the music that had been produced. And so of other arts. Nor was this all ; for, happening to say to myself, one night as I entered a long street, "I shall never see the one thousandth part of the people who are living in this single street," it occurred to me that every man and woman was a most interesting book, if one knew how to read them. Here opened upon me a new world of misery ; for, if books and works of art existed by millions, men existed by hundreds of millions. Nay, even if it had been possible for me to know all of my own generation, yet, like Dr. Faustus, who desired to see "Helen of Greece," I should still have been dissatisfied ; for what was one generation to all that were past ? Nay, my madness took yet a higher flight ; for I considered that I stood on a little isthmus of

time which connected the two great worlds, the past and the future. I stood in equal relation to both; I asked for admittance to one as much as to the other. Even if a necromancer could have brought up the great men of the seventeenth century, I should have said, "What good does all this do me? Where are those of the twentieth century?" —and so onward! In short, I never turned my thoughts this way but I fell into a downright midsummer madness. I could not enjoy what I had,—craving for that which I had not, and could not have; was thirsty, like Tantalus, in the midst of waters; even when using my present wealth, thought only of its perishableness; and "wept to have what I so feared to lose."

But all this, you will say, was, by my own admission, "madness." Madness, I grant; but such a madness! not as lunatics suffer; no hallucination of the brain; but a madness like that of misers,—the usurpation and despotism of one feeling, natural in itself, but travelling into an excess which at last upset all which should have balanced it. And I must assert that, with allowance for difference of degrees, no madness is more common. Many of those who give themselves up to the study of languages do so under the same disease which I have described; and, if they do not carry it on to the same extremity of wretchedness, it is because they are not so logical, and so consistent in their madness, as I was. Under our present enormous accumulation of books, I do affirm that a miserable distraction of choice (which is the germ of such a madness) must be very generally incident to the times; that the symptoms of it are, in fact, very prevalent; and that one of the chief symptoms is an enormous "gluttonism" for books, and for adding language to language; and in this way it is that literature becomes much more a source of torment than of pleasure. Nay, I will go further, and will say that, of many who escape this disease, some owe their privilege simply to the narrowness of their minds, and contracted range of their sympathies with literature,—which enlarged, they would soon lose it. Others again, owe it to their situation; as, for instance, in a country town, where, books being few, a man can use up all his materials; his appetite is unpalled, and he is grateful for the

loan of a MS., &c. But bring him up to London; show him the waggon-loads of unused stores which he is at liberty to work up; tell him that these even are but a trifle, perhaps, to what he may find in the libraries of Paris, Dresden, Milan, &c., of religious houses, of English noblemen, &c.,—and this same man who came up to London blithe and happy will leave it pale and sad. You have ruined his peace of mind. A subject which he fancied himself capable of exhausting he finds to be a labour for centuries. He has no longer the healthy pleasure of feeling himself master of his materials; he is degraded into their slave. Perhaps I dwell too much on this subject; but allow me, before I leave it, to illustrate what I have said by the case of two eminent literati, who are at this moment exhibiting themselves as a couple of figurantes (if I may so say) on the stage of Europe, and who have sacrificed their own happiness and dignity of mind to the very madness I have been describing; or, if not, to the far more selfish passion for notoriety and ostentatious display. The men I mean are Frederick Schlegel, better known to the English public as the friend of Madame de Staël, and F. Bouterwek.[1]

The history of the last is somewhat ludicrous. Coming upon the stage at a time when Kant possessed the national mind of Germany, he thought it would be a good speculation not to fall into the train of the philosopher, but to open a sort of chapel of dissent. He saw no reason why men should not swear by Bouterwek, as well as by Kant; and, connecting this fact with the subsequent confession of Bouterwek that he was in reality playing off a conscious hoax, it is laughable to mention that for a time he absolutely found some followers—who worshipped him, but suspiciously and provisionally. Unfortunately, however, as he had no leisure or ability to understand Kant, he was obliged to adopt Dr. Priestley's plan of revoking and cancelling in every successive work all his former works, as false, pestilent, and heretical. This upset him. The philosopher was unfrocked; and in that line of business he found himself bankrupt. At this crisis things looked ill. However, being young, he pleaded

[1] Frederick Charles William Schlegel, 1772-1829; Frederick Bouterwek, historian of Spanish literature, 1766-1828.—M.

his tender years. George Barnwell and others had been led astray as well as himself by keeping bad company [1]: he had now quitted all connexion with metaphysics, and begged to inform the public that he had opened an entirely new concern for criticism in all its branches. He kept his word; he left off hoaxing, and applied himself to a respectable line of business.

The fruits of his labours were a history, in twelve volumes, of modern literature from the end of the thirteenth century. Of this work I have examined all that I pretend to judge of,—namely, the two sections relating to the German and the English literature; and, not to do him injustice, if it professed to be no more than a bibliographical record of books, it is executed with a very laudable care and fidelity. But imagine to yourself the vast compass of his plan. He professes to give the history of—1. Spanish, 2. Portuguese, 3. English, 4. German, 5. French, 6. Italian, literature; no sketch, observe, or abstract of them, but a full and formal history. Conceive, if you can, the monstrous and insane pretensions involved in such a scheme. At starting he had five languages to learn, besides the dialects of his own; not only so, but five languages, each through all its varieties for the space of half a millennium: English, for instance, not merely of this day, but the English of Chaucer, of the Metrical Romances, nay, even of Robert of Gloucester in 1280. Next, the mere printed books (to say nothing of the MSS.) in any one of these languages, to be read and meditated as they ought to be by a *historian* of the literature, would have found full employment for twelve able-bodied men through an entire life. And after all, when the materials were ready, the work of composition would be still to begin. Such were Bouterwek's pretensions.

As to Schlegel's,—who, without any more genius or originality, has much more talent,—his were still more extravagant, and were pushed to an extremity that must, I should think, at times disquiet his admirers with a feeling that all is not sound. For, though he did not profess to go so much into detail as Bouterwek, still his abstracts are

[1] George Barnwell: the London apprentice who is the hero of Lillo's once famous tragedy of that name, first acted in 1731.—M.

represented as built on as much reading, though not directly quoted; and to all that Bouterwek held forth in his promises Schlegel added, as a little *bonus* to his subscribers, 1. Oriental literature, 2. The Scandinavian literature, 3. The Provençal literature, and, for aught I know, a billion of things besides; to say nothing of an active share in the current literature, as reviewer, magazinist, and author of all work.

Now, the very history of these pretensions exposes their hollowness: to record them is to refute them. Knowing, as we all know, how many years it demands, and by what a leisurely and genial communication with their works it is, that we can gain any deep intimacy with even a few great artists, such as Shakspere, Milton, or Euripides, how monstrous a fiction would that man force on our credulity who tells us that he had read and weighed in the balances the total products of human intellect dispersed through thirty languages for a period of three thousand years; and how gross a delusion does *he* practise upon his own mind who can persuade himself that it is *reading* to cram himself with words the bare sense of which can hardly have time to glance, like the lamps of a mail coach, upon his hurried and bewildered understanding! There is a picture at Oxford, which I saw when a boy, of an old man, with misery in his eye, in the act of copying a book; and the story attached (I forget whether with any historic foundation) is that he was under a vow to copy out some great portion of the Bible before he allowed himself (or was allowed) to eat. I dare say you know the picture; and perhaps I tell the story wrong. However, just such a man, and just so woebegone, must this man of words appear when he is alone in his study; with a frozen heart and a famished intellect; and every now and then perhaps exclaiming with Alcibiades, "O ye Athenians! what a world of hardship I endure to obtain your applause!" So slightly is his knowledge worked into the texture of his mind that I am persuaded a brain fever would sweep it all away.

With this sketch of Messrs. Bouterwek and Schlegel, it is superfluous to add that their criticisms are utterly *worthless*; being all words—words—words: however, with this difference: that Bouterwek's are simply = 0, being the mere

rubbishy sweepings from the works of literatuli long since defunct; but Schlegel's, agreeably to his natural haughtiness and superior talents, are bad in a positive sense—being filled with such conceits, fancies, and fictions, as you would naturally expect from a clever man talking about what he had never, in any true sense of the word, read.[1] O genius of English good sense, keep any child of mine from ever sacrificing his peace and intellectual health to such a life of showy emptiness, of pretence, of noise, and of words; and, even with a view to the opinion of others, if it were worth while sacrificing very much to *that*, teach him how far more enviable is the reputation of having produced even one work, though but in a lower department of art, and which has given pleasure to myriads—(such, suppose, as *The Vicar of Wakefield*)—than to have lived in the wonderment of a gazing crowd, like a rope-dancer, or a posture-master, with the fame of incredible attainments that tend to no man's pleasure, and which perish to the remembrance of all men as soon as their possessor is in his grave.

[1] The most disingenuous instances in Schlegel of familiar acquaintance claimed with subjects of which he is necessarily ignorant are the numerous passages in which he speaks of philosophers, especially of Spinoza, Leibnitz, and Kant. In such cases his sentences are always most artificially and jesuitically constructed, to give him the air of being quite at his ease on the one hand, and yet, on the other, to avoid committing himself by too much descent into particulars. So dangerous, however, is it for the ablest man to attempt speaking of what he does not understand, that, as a sailor will detect a landsman, however expert in the use of nautical diction, before he has uttered two sentences, so, with all his art and finesse, and speaking besides to questions of his own choosing, yet cannot Schlegel escape detection in any one instance when he has attempted to act the philosopher. Even where the thing said is not otherwise objectionable, it generally detects itself as the remark of a novice, by addressing itself to something extra-essential in the philosophy, and which a true judge would have passed over as impertinent to the real business of the system. Of the ludicrous blunders which inevitably arise both in Bouterwek and Schlegel from hasty reading, or no reading at all, I noted some curious instances in my pocket-book; but, not having it with me, I shall mention two from memory. Bouterwek and Schlegel both would be highly offended, I suppose, if I were to doubt whether they had ever read the Paradise Lost. "O calumny, vile calumny! We that have given such fine criticisms upon it, not to have read it!" Yes; but there is such a case *in rerum natura* as that of criticising a work which the critic had not even seen. Now, that Bouterwek had not

Thus, at some risk of fatiguing you, I have endeavoured to sharpen your attention to the extreme danger which threatens a self-instructor in the besetting temptations to an over-cultivation of languages; temptations which, whether appealing to his vanity and love of ostentation, or to his craving for a multifarious mastery over books, terminate in the same evil of substituting a barren study of words,—which is, besides, the most lingering of all studies, —for the healthy exercises of the intellect. All the great European poets, orators, and wits, are mentioned in a man's hearing so often, and so much discussion is constantly going on about their comparative merits, that a body of irritation and curiosity collects about these names, and unites with more legitimate feelings to persuade a man that it is necessary he should read them all — each in his own language. In a celebrated satire (*The Pursuits of Literature*), much read in my youth, and which I myself read about twenty-five years ago,[1] I remember one counsel — there

read the Paradise Lost I think probable from this :—Bodmer, during part of the first half of the last century, as is known to the students of German literature, was at the head of a party who supported the English literature against the French party of the old dolt Gottsched. [Bodmer, 1698-1783; Gottsched, 1700-1766.—M.] From some work of Bodmer's, Bouterwek quotes with praise a passage which, from being in plain German prose, he supposes to be Bodmer's, but which, unfortunately, happens to be a passage in the Paradise Lost, and so memorable a passage that no one having once read it could have failed to recognise it. So much for Bouterwek. As to Schlegel, the presumption against him rests upon this :—He is lecturing Milton in a high professor's style for his choice of a subject: "Milton," says he, "did not consider that the fall of man was but an inchoate action, "but a part of a system, of which the restoration of man is another "and equally essential part. The action of the Paradise Lost is, "therefore, essentially imperfect." (Quoting from memory, and from a memory some years old, I do not pretend to give the words, but this is the sense.) Now, *pace tanti viri*, Milton *did* consider this, and has provided for it by a magnificent expedient, which a man who had read the Paradise Lost would have been likely to remember,—namely, by the Vision combined with the Narrative of the Archangel, in which his final restoration is made known to Adam; without which, indeed, to say nothing of Mr. Schlegel's objection, the poem could not have closed with that *repose* necessary as the final impression of any great work of art.

[1] *The Pursuits of Literature, a Satirical Poem, with Notes*, pub-

addressed to young men, but, in fact, of universal application. "I call upon them," said the author, "to *dare* to be ignorant of many things": a wise counsel, and justly expressed; for it requires much courage to forsake popular paths of knowledge, merely upon a conviction that they are not favourable to the ultimate ends of knowledge. In you, however, *that* sort of courage may be presumed; but how will you "dare to be ignorant" of many things in opposition to the cravings of your own mind? Simply thus: destroy these false cravings by introducing a healthier state of the organ. A good scheme of study will soon show itself to be such by this one test—that it will exclude as powerfully as it will appropriate; it will be a system of repulsion no less than of attraction; once thoroughly possessed and occupied by the deep and genial pleasures of one truly intellectual pursuit, you will be easy and indifferent to all others that had previously teased you with transient excitement; just as you will sometimes see a man superficially irritated, as it were, with wandering fits of liking for three or four women at once, which he is absurd enough to call "being in love"; but, once profoundly in love (supposing him capable of being so), he never makes such a mistake again, all his feelings after *that* being absorbed into a sublime unity. Now, without anticipating this scheme of study out of its place, yet in general you know whether your intentions lean most to science or to literature. For upon this decision revolve the whole motives which can determine your choice of languages; as, for instance, if you are in quest of science or philosophy, no language in Europe at this day (unless the Turkish) is so slenderly furnished as the Spanish; on the other hand, for literature, I am disposed to think that after the English none is so wealthy (I mean in quality, not in quantity).

Here, however, to prevent all mistakes, let me establish one necessary distinction. The word *literature* is a perpetual source of confusion, because it is used in two senses, and

lished anonymously, in four successive parts, in 1794-7, was by Thomas James Mathias (1757-1835), author of various other books. It was very popular at one time, and is frequently mentioned by De Quincey, but is now all but forgotten.—M.

those senses liable to be confounded with each other. In a philosophical use of the word, Literature is the direct and adequate antithesis of Books of Knowledge. But, in a popular use, it is a mere term of convenience for expressing inclusively the total books of a language. In this latter sense, a dictionary, a grammar, a spelling-book, an almanac, a pharmacopœia, a Parliamentary report, a system of farriery, a treatise on billiards, the Court Calendar, &c., belong to the literature. But, in the philosophical sense, not only would it be ludicrous to reckon these as parts of the literature, but even books of much higher pretensions must be excluded—as, for instance, books of voyages and travels, and generally all books in which the matter to be communicated is paramount to the manner or form of its communication ("ornari res ipsa negat, contenta doceri"). It is difficult to construct the idea of "literature" with severe accuracy; for it is a fine art—the supreme fine art, and liable to the difficulties which attend such a subtle notion; in fact, a severe construction of the idea must be the *result* of a philosophical investigation into this subject, and cannot precede it. But, for the sake of obtaining some expression for literature that may answer our present purpose, let us throw the question into another form. I have said that the antithesis of Literature is Books of Knowledge. Now, what is that antithesis to *knowledge* which is here implicitly latent in the word literature? The vulgar antithesis is *pleasure* ("aut prodesse volunt, aut delectare poetæ"). Books, we are told, propose to *instruct* or to *amuse*. Indeed! However, not to spend any words upon it, I suppose you will admit that this wretched antithesis will be of no service to us. And, by the way, let me remark to you, in this, as in other cases, how men by their own errors of understanding, by feeble thinking, and inadequate distinctions, forge chains of meanness and servility for themselves. For, this miserable alternative being once admitted, observe what follows. In which class of books does the Paradise Lost stand? Among those which instruct, or those which *amuse*? Now, if a man answers among those which instruct, he lies; for there is no instruction in it, nor could be in any great poem, according to the meaning which the word must bear in this dis-

tinction, unless it is meant that it should involve its own antithesis. But, if he says, "No; amongst those which amuse," then what a beast must he be to degrade, and in this way, what has done the most of any human work to raise and dignify human nature. But the truth is, you see that the idiot does not wish to degrade it; on the contrary, he would willingly tell a lie in its favour, if that would be admitted; but such is the miserable state of slavery to which he has reduced himself by his own puny distinction; for, as soon as he hops out of one of his little cells, he is under a necessity of hopping into the other. The true antithesis[1] to knowledge, in this case, is not *pleasure*, but *power*. All that is literature seeks to communicate power; all that is not literature, to communicate knowledge. Now, if it be asked what is meant by communicating power, I, in my turn, would ask by what name a man would designate the case in which I should be made to feel vividly, and with a vital consciousness, emotions which ordinary life rarely or never supplies occasions for exciting, and which had previously lain unwakened, and hardly within the dawn of consciousness—as myriads of modes of feeling are at this moment in every human mind for want of a poet to organize them? I say, when these inert and sleeping forms *are* organized, when these possibilities *are* actualized, is this conscious and living possession of mine *power*, or what is it?

[1] For which distinction, as for most of the sound criticism on poetry, or any subject connected with it that I have ever met with, I must acknowledge my obligations to many years' conversation with Mr. Wordsworth. Upon this occasion it may be useful to notice that there is a rhetorical use of the word "power," very different from the analytic one here introduced, which, also, is due originally to Mr. Wordsworth, and will be found in no book before 1798; this is now become a regular slang term in London conversation. In reference to which, it is worth notice that a critic, speaking of the late Mr. Shelley, a year or two ago, in the most popular literary journal of the day, said "It is alleged that there is power in Mr. Shelley's poetry; now, there can be no power shown in poetry, except by writing good poems" (or words to that effect). Waiving, however, the question of Mr. Shelley's merits, so far is this remark from being true that the word was originally introduced expressly to provide for the case where, though the poem was *not* good, from defect in the *composition*, or from other causes, the stamina and *matériel* of good poetry, as fine thinking and passionate conceptions, could not be denied to exist.

When, in King Lear, the height, and depth, and breadth, of human passion is revealed to us, and, for the purposes of a sublime antagonism, is revealed in the weakness of an old man's nature, and in one night two worlds of storm are brought face to face—the human world, and the world of physical nature—mirrors of each other, semichoral antiphonies, strophe and antistrophe heaving with rival convulsions, and with the double darkness of night and madness,—when I am thus suddenly startled into a feeling of the infinity of the world within me, is this power, or what may I call it? Space, again, what is it in most men's minds? The lifeless form of the world without us, a postulate of the geometrician, with no more vitality or real existence to their feelings than the square root of two. But, if Milton has been able to *inform* this empty theatre, peopling it with Titanic shadows, forms that sat at the eldest counsels of the infant world, chaos and original night,—

> "Ghostly shapes,
> To meet at noontide, Fear and trembling Hope,
> Death the Skeleton,
> And Time the Shadow,"—

so that, from being a thing to inscribe with diagrams, it has become under his hands a vital agent on the human mind,—I presume that I may justly express the tendency of the Paradise Lost by saying that it communicates power; a pretension far above all communication of knowledge. Henceforth, therefore, I shall use the antithesis power and knowledge as the most philosophical expression for literature (that is, Literæ Humaniores) and anti-literature (that is, Literæ didacticæ—Παιδεια).

Now, then, prepared with this distinction, let us inquire whether—weighing the difficulties against the benefits—there is an overbalance of motive for you with your purposes to study what are inaccurately termed the "classical" languages.[1] And, first, with respect to Greek, we have often

[1] A late writer has announced it as a matter of discovery that the term "classics" is applicable also to the modern languages. But, surely, this was never doubted by any man who considered the meaning and origin of the term. It is drawn, as the reader must be reminded, from the political economy of Rome. Such a man was

had the question debated, and in our own days solemn challenges thrown out, and solemn adjudications given on the question, whether any benefit corresponding to the time and the labour can be derived from the study of the ancient classics. Hitherto, however, the question could not be rightly shaped; for, as no man chose to plead "amusement" as a sufficient motive for so great an undertaking, it was always debated with a single reference to the *knowledge* involved in those literatures. But this is a ground wholly untenable. For, let the knowledge be what it might, all knowledge is translateable, and translateable without one atom of loss. If this were all, therefore, common sense would prescribe that faithful translations should be executed of all the classics, and all men in future depend upon these vicarious labours. With respect to the Greek, this would soon be accomplished; for what is the knowledge which lurks in that language? All knowledge may be commodiously distributed into science and erudition: of the latter (antiquities, geography, philology, theology, &c.) there is a very considerable body; of the former but little, namely, the mathematical and musical works, and the medical works —what else? Nothing that can deserve the name of science, except the single *organon* of Aristotle. With Greek medicine I suppose that you have no concern. As to mathematics, a man must be an idiot if he were to study Greek for the sake of Archimedes, Apollonius, or Diophantus.[1] In Latin or in French you may find them all regularly translated, and parts of them embodied in the works of English mathematicians. Besides, if it were otherwise, where the notions and all the relations are so few, elementary, and determinate, and the

rated as to his income in the third class, such another in the fourth, and so on; but he who was in the highest was said emphatically to be of *the* class, "classicus," a class-man, without adding the number, as in that case superfluous. Hence, by an obvious analogy, the best authors were rated as classici, or men of the highest class; just as in English we say "men of rank," absolutely, for men who are in the highest ranks of the State. The particular error by which this mere formal term of relation was *materiated* (if I may so say) in one of its accidents (namely, the application to Greek and Roman writers) is one of the commonest and most natural.

[1] Archimedes, B.C. 287-212; Apollonius, about B.C. 240; Diophantus, in 5th century A.D.—M.

vocabulary therefore so scanty, as in mathematics, it could not be necessary to learn Greek, even if you were disposed to read the mathematicians in that language. I see no marvel in Halley's having translated an Arabic manuscript on mathematics with no previous knowledge of Arabic; on the contrary, it is a case (and not a very difficult case) of the art of deciphering, so much practised by Wallis and other great mathematicians contemporary with Halley.[1] But all this is an idle disputation; for the knowledge of whatsoever sort which lies in Grecian mines, wretchedly as we are furnished with vernacular translations, the Latin version will always supply. This, therefore, is not the ground to be taken by the advocate of Greek letters. It is not for knowledge that Greek is worth learning, but for power. Here arises the question—Of what value is this power? that is, how is the Grecian literature to be rated in relation to other literatures? Now, it is not only because "De Carthagine satius est silere quam parcius dicere," but also because in my judgment there is no more offensive form of levity than the readiness to speak on great problems incidentally and occasionally,—that I shall wholly decline this question. We have hitherto seen no rational criticism on Greek literature; nor, indeed, to say the truth, much criticism which teaches anything, or solves anything, upon any literature. I shall simply suggest one consideration to you. The question is limited wholly, as you see, to the value of the literature in the proper sense of that word. Now, it is my private theory, to which you will allow what degree of weight you please, that the antique or pagan literature is a polar antagonist to the modern or Christian literature; that each is an evolution from a distinct principle, having nothing in common but what is necessarily common to all modes of thought,—namely, good sense and logic; and that they are to be criticised from different stations and points of view. This same thought has occurred to others; but no great advance is made simply by propounding the general thesis; and as yet nobody has done more.[2] It is only by the develop-

[1] See *ante*, Vol. VIII, pp. 278-280.—M.

[2] Nor do I much expect, *will* do more: which opinion I build on the particular formula chosen for expressing the opposition of the

ment of this thesis that any real service can be performed. This I have myself attempted, in a series of "reveries" on that subject; and, if you continue to hesitate on the question of learning Greek now that you know exactly how that question is shaped, and to what it points, my manuscript contains all the assistance that it is in *my* power to offer you in such a dilemma. The difference of the antique from the Christian literature, you must bear in mind, is not like that between English and Spanish literature—species and species—but as between genus and genus. The advantages, therefore, are—1, the *power* which it offers generally as a literature, 2, the new phases under which it presents the human mind, the antique being the other hemisphere, as it were, which, with our own or Christian hemisphere, composes the entire sphere of human intellectual energy.

So much for the Greek. Now, as to the Latin, the case is wholly reversed. Here the literature is of far less value; and, on the whole, with your views, it might be doubted whether it would recompense your pains. But the anti-literature (as for want of a strict antithesis I must call it) is inestimable; Latin having been the universal language of Christendom for so long a period. The Latin works since the Restoration of Letters are alone of immense value for knowledge of every kind; much science, inexhaustible erudition; and to this day in Germany, and elsewhere on the Continent, the best part of the latter is communicated in Latin. Now, though all knowledge *is* (which power is not) adequately communicable by translation, yet, as there is no hope that the immense bibliotheca of Latin accumulated in the last three centuries ever will be translated, you cannot possibly dispense with this language; and, that being so, it is fortunate that you have already a superficial acquaintance with it. The best means of cultivating it further, and the grounds of selection amongst the *modern* languages of Christendom, I will discuss fully in my next letter.—Yours, most truly,

X. Y. Z.

antique and the Christian literature,—namely, the classical and the romantic. This seeming to me to imply a total misconception of the true principle on which the distinction rests, I naturally look for no further developments of the thesis from that quarter.

LETTER IV

ON LANGUAGES (CONTINUED)

My dear Sir,—It is my misfortune to have been under the necessity too often of writing rapidly, and without opportunities for after-revision. In cases where much *composition*[1] is demanded, this is a serious misfortune, and sometimes irreparable, except at the price of recasting the whole work. But to a subject like the present little of what is properly called composition is applicable ; and somewhat the less from the indeterminate form of *letters*, into which I have purposely thrown my communications. Errors in composition apart, there can be no others of importance, except such as relate to the matter ; and those are not at all the more incident to a man because he is in a hurry. Not to be too much at leisure is, indeed, often an advantage. On no occasion of their lives do men generally speak better than on the scaffold, and with the executioner at their side ; partly, indeed, because they are then most in earnest, and unsolicitous about effect ; but partly, also, because the pressure of the time sharpens and condenses the faculty of abstracting the capital points at issue. On this account I do not plead haste as an absolute and unmitigated disadvantage. Haste palliates what haste occasions. Now, there is no haste which can occasion oversights as to the matter to him who has meditated sufficiently upon his subject ; all that haste can do in such a case is to affect the language with respect to accuracy and precision ; and thus far I plead it. I shall never plead it as shrinking from the severest responsibility for the thoughts and substance of anything I say ; but often in palliation of expressions careless or ill chosen. And at no time can I stand more in need of such indulgence than at present, when I write both hastily and under circumstances of—— But no matter what. Believe, in general, that I write under circumstances as

[1] "*Composition*" :—This word I use in a sense not indeed peculiar to myself, but yet not very common, nor anywhere, that I know of, sufficiently developed. It is of the highest importance in criticism ; and, therefore, I shall add a note upon the true construction of the idea, either at the end of this letter or the next, according to the space left.

unfavourable for careful selection of words as can well be imagined.

In my last letter I declined to speak of the antique literature, as a subject too unwieldy and unmanageable for my limits. I now recur to it for the sake of guarding and restraining that particular sentence in which I have spoken of the Roman literature as inferior to the Greek. In common with all the world, I must, of necessity, think it so in the drama, and generally in poetry κατ' ἐξοχην. Indeed, for some forms of poetry, even of the lower order, it was the misfortune of the Roman literature that they were not cultivated until the era of fastidious taste, which in every nation takes place at a certain stage of society. They were harshly transplanted as exotics, and never passed through the just degrees of a natural growth on Roman soil. Notwithstanding this, the most exquisite specimens of the lighter lyric which the world has yet seen must be sought for in Horace; and very few writers of any country have approached to Virgil in the art of *composition*, however low we may be disposed at this day to rank him as a poet, when tried in the unequal contest with the sublimities of the Christian literature. The truth is (and this is worth being attended to), that the peculiar sublimity of the Roman mind does not express itself, nor is it at all to be sought, in their poetry. Poetry, according to the Roman ideal of it, was not an adequate organ for the grander movements of the national mind. Roman sublimity must be looked for in Roman acts and in Roman sayings.

For the acts, see their history for a thousand years, the early and fabulous part not excepted,—which, for the very reason that it *is* fabulous,[1] must be taken as so much the

[1] In addition to the arguments lately urged in the *Quarterly Review* for bastardizing and degrading the early history of Rome, I may here mention two others, alleged many years ago in conversation by a friend of mine. 1. *The immoderate length of time assigned to the reigns of the kings.* For, though it is possible that one king's reign may cover two entire generations (as that of George III), or even two and a half (as that of Louis XIV), yet it is in the highest degree improbable that a series of seven kings, immediately consecutive, should average, in the most favourable cases, more than twenty-four years for each: for the proof of which, see the Collective Chronology of Ancient and Modern Europe. 2. *The dramatic and artificial casting of the parts for these kings.* Each steps forward as a scenical person, to play a distinct part

purer product of the Roman mind. Even the infancy of Rome was, like the cradle of Hercules, glorified by splendid marvels,—"Nec licuit populis parvum te, Nile, videre." For their sayings, for their anecdotes, their serious bon-mots, there are none equal to the Roman in grandeur. "Englishman!" said a Frenchman once to me, "you that contest our claim to the sublime, and contend that 'la manière noble' of our artists wears a falsetto character, what do you think of that saying of a king of ours, That it became not the King of France to avenge the injuries of the Duke of Orleans (that is, of himself, under that title)?" "Think!" said I, "why, I think it is a magnificent and regal speech, and such is my English generosity that I heartily wish the Emperor Hadrian had not said the same thing fifteen hundred years before."[1] I would willingly give five shillings myself to purchase the copyright of the saying for the French nation; for *they* want it, and the Romans could spare it. Pereant qui ante nos nostra dixerunt! Cursed be the name of Hadrian that stands between France and the sublimest of bon-mots! Where, again, will you find a more adequate expression of the Roman majesty than in the saying of Trajan—Imperatorem oportere stantem mori—that Cæsar ought to die standing, a speech of imperatorial grandeur; implying that he, who was "the foremost man of all this world," and, in regard to all other nations, the representative of his own, should express its characteristic virtue in his farewell act,—should die *in procinctu*,—and should meet the last enemy,[2] as the first,

or character. One makes Rome; another makes laws; another makes an army; another, religious rights, &c. And last of all comes a gentleman who "enacts the brute part" of destroying, in effect, what his predecessors had constructed, and thus furnishes a decorous catastrophe for the whole play, and a magnificent birth for the republican form of government.

[1] Submonente quodam ut in pristinos inimicos animadverteret, negavit se ita facturum? adjecta civili voce,—minime licere Principi Romano, ut quæ privatus agitasset odia ista Imperator exequi. *Spartian in Had.*—Vid. Histor. August. [Some one hinting to him that he should look after his old enemies, he said he would do nothing of the kind, adding this courteous saying,—that it was the last thing allowable for a Roman nobleman to follow out when he was Emperor the enmities he might have had in his private capacity.—M.]

[2] Neither let it be objected that it is irrational to oppose what there

with a Roman countenance, and in a soldier's attitude. If this had an imperatorial, what follows had a consular majesty, and is almost the grandest story upon record. Marius, the man who rose *a caliga* to be seven times consul, was in a dungeon, and a slave was sent in with commission to put him to death. These were the persons,—the two extremities of exalted and forlorn humanity, its vanward and its rearward man, a Roman consul and an abject slave. But their natural relations to each other were, by the caprice of fortune, monstrously inverted. The consul was in chains: the slave was for a moment the arbiter of his fate. By what spells, what magic, did Marius reinstate himself in his natural prerogatives? By what marvels, drawn from heaven or from earth, did he, in the twinkling of an eye, again invest himself with the purple, and place between himself and his assassin a host of shadowy lictors? By the mere blank supremacy of great minds over weak ones. He *fascinated* the slave, as a rattlesnake does a bird. Standing "like Teneriffe," he smote him with his eye, and said, "Tune, homo, audes occidere C. Marium?" Dost thou, fellow, presume to kill Caius Marius? Whereat the reptile, quaking under the voice, nor daring to affront the consular eye, sank gently to the ground, turned round upon his hands and feet, and, crawling out of the prison like any other vermin, left Marius standing in solitude, as steadfast and immovable as the capitol.

In such anecdotes as these it is—in the actions of trying emergencies and their appropriate circumstances—that I find the revelation of the Roman mind under its highest aspect. The Roman mind was great in the presence of man, mean in

is no chance of opposing with success. When the Roman Senate kept their seats immovably upon the entrance of the Gauls reeking from the storm of Rome, they did it not as supposing that this spectacle of senatorial dignity could disarm the wrath of their savage enemy; if they had, their act would have lost all its splendour. The language of their conduct was this:—So far as the grandeur of the will is concerned, we have carried our resistance to the last extremity, and have expressed it in the way suitable to our rank. For all beyond we were not answerable; and, having recorded our "protest" in such an emphatic language, death becomes no dishonour. The *stantem mori* expresses the same principle, but in a symbolic act.

the presence of nature; impotent to comprehend or to delineate the internal strife of *passion*,[1] but powerful beyond any other national mind to display the energy of the *will* victorious over all passion. Hence it is that the true Roman sublime exists nowhere in such purity as in those works which were *not* composed with a reference to Grecian models. On this account I wholly dissent from the shallow classification which expresses the relations of merit between the writers of the Augustan period and that which followed under the type of a golden and silver age.[2] As artists, and with reference to composition, no doubt many of the writers of the latter age were rightly so classed; but an inferiority *quoad hoc* argues no uniform and absolute inferiority; and the fact is that in weight and grandeur of thought the silver writers were much superior to the golden. Indeed, this might have been looked for on *a priori* grounds; for the silver writers were more truly Roman writers from two causes: first, because they trusted more to their own native style of thinking, and, looking less anxiously to Grecian archetypes, they wrote more naturally, feelingly, and originally; secondly, because the political circumstances of their times were advantageous, and liberated them from the suspicious caution which cramped the natural movements of a Roman mind on the first establishment of the monarchy. Whatever outrages of despotism occurred in the times of the silver writers were sudden, transient, capricious, and personal in their origin and in their direction; but, in the Augustan age, it was not the temper of Augustus personally, and certainly not the temper of the writers leading them to any excesses of licentious speculation, which created the danger of bold thinking. The danger was in the times, which were unquiet and revolutionary. The struggle with the republican

[1] So palpable is this truth that the most unreflecting critics have hence been led to suspect the pretensions of the *Atys* to a Roman origin. [*Atys* is the title of a peculiar religious poem of Catullus. —M.]

[2] A favourite old scheme for the chronology of the Latin Literature was that which represented it by this succession of Ages:—the *Golden Age*, ending with Augustus, A.D. 14; the *Silver Age*, from Augustus to Hadrian, ending about A.D. 150; and then the *Brazen*, *Iron*, and *Leaden* Ages, of the subsequent centuries of the Empire.—M.

party was yet too recent; the wounds and cicatrices of the State too green; the existing order of things too immature and critical: the triumphant party still viewed *as a* party, and for that cause still feeling itself a party militant. Augustus had that chronic complaint of a "crick in the neck" of which later princes are said to have an acute attack every 30th of January. Hence a servile and timid tone in the literature. The fiercer republicans could not be safely mentioned. Even Cicero it was not decorous to praise; and Virgil, as perhaps you know, has, by insinuation, contrived to insult[1] his memory in the *Æneid*. But, as the irresponsible power of the emperors grew better secured, their jealousy of republican sentiment abated much of its keenness. And, considering that republican freedom of thought was the very matrix of Roman sublimity, it ought not to surprise us that, as fast as the national mind was lightened from the pressure which weighed upon the natural style of its sentiment, the literature should recoil into a freer movement, with an elasticity proportioned to the intensity and brevity of its depression. Accordingly, in Seneca the philosopher, in Lucan, in Tacitus, even in Pliny the Younger, &c., but especially in the two first, I affirm that there is a loftiness of thought more eminently and characteristically Roman than in any preceding writers: and in *that* view to rank them as writers of a silver age is worthy only of those who are servile to the commonplaces of unthinking criticism.

The style of thought in the silver writers, as a raw material, was generally more valuable than that of their predecessors, however much they fell below them in the art of working up that material. And I shall add further that, when I admit

[1] "*Orabunt alii causas melius*" (*Æn.* VI. 850),—an opinion upon the Grecian superiority in this point which is so doubtful even to us in our perfect impartiality at this day, as a general opinion without discrimination of persons, that we may be sure it could not spontaneously have occurred to a Roman in a burst of patriotic feeling, and must have been deliberately manufactured to meet the malignant wishes of Augustus. More especially because, in whatever relation of opposition or of indifference to the principles of a military government, to the *Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos*, Virgil might view the fine arts of painting, statuary, &c., he could not but have viewed the arts of forensic eloquence as standing in the closest alliance with that principle.

the vast defects of Lucan, for instance, as an artist, I would not be understood as involving in that concession the least toleration of the vulgar doctrine that the diction of the silver writers is in any respect below the standard of pure Latinity as existing in the writers of the Ciceronian age. A better structure of Latinity I will affirm boldly, does not exist than that of Petronius Arbiter[1]: and, taken as a body, the writers of what is denominated the silver age are for diction no less Roman, and for thought much more intensely Roman, than any other equal number of writers from the preceding ages, and, with a very few exceptions, are the best fitted to take a permanent station in the regard of men at your age or mine, when the meditative faculties, if they exist at all, are apt to expand, and to excite a craving for a greater weight of thought than is usually to be met with in the elder writers of the Roman literature.

This explanation made, and having made that "amende honorable" to the Roman literature which my own gratitude demanded, I come now to the remaining part of my business in this letter,—namely, the grounds of choice amongst the languages of Modern Europe. Reserving to my conclusion anything I have to say upon these *languages* as depositories of *literature* properly so called, I shall first speak of them as depositories of *knowledge*. Among the four great races of men in Modern Europe—namely 1. The Celtic, occupying a few of the western extremities[2] of Europe; 2. The Teutonic, occupying the northern and midland parts[3]; 3. The Latin (blended with Teutonic tribes) occupying the south[4]; and, 4. The Slavonic, occupying the east,—it is

[1] Petronius Arbiter, author of a kind of novel called *Satyricon*, of which only fragments remain, died by suicide A.D. 66.—M.

[2] Namely: 1. In the Cornish, Welsh, Manks, Highland Scotch, and Irish provinces of the British empire (in the first and last it is true that the barbarous Celtic blood has been too much improved by Teutonic admixture to allow of our considering the existing races as purely Celtic; this, however, does not affect the classification of their genuine literary relics); 2. In Biscay; and 3. In Basse Bretagne (Armorica): to say nothing of a Celtic district said to exist in the Alps, &c.

[3] Namely: Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, England, and Scotch Lowlands.

[4] Namely: Italy, France, Spain, and Portugal.

evident that of the first and the last it is unnecessary to say anything in this place, because their pretensions to literature do not extend to our present sense of the word. No Celt even, however extravagant, pretends to the possession of a body of Celtic philosophy and Celtic science of independent growth. The Celtic and Slavonic languages therefore dismissed, our business at present is with those of the Latin and the Teutonic families. Now, three of the Latin family, namely, the Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese, are at once excluded for the purpose before us: because it is notorious that, from political and religious causes, these three nations have but feebly participated in the general scientific and philosophic labours of the age. Italy, indeed, has cultivated natural philosophy with an exclusive zeal; a direction probably impressed upon the national mind by patriotic reverence for her great names in that department. But, merely for the sake of such knowledge (supposing no other motive), it would be idle to pay the price of learning a language,—all the current contributions to science being regularly gathered into the general garner of Europe by the scientific journals both at home and abroad. Of the Latin languages, therefore, which are wholly the languages of Catholic nations, but one—that is, the French—can present any sufficient attractions to a student in search of general knowledge. Of the Teutonic literatures, on the other hand, which are the adequate representatives of the Protestant intellectual interest in Europe (no Catholic nations speaking a Teutonic language except the southern states of Germany and part of the Netherlands), all give way at once to the paramount pretensions of the English and the German. I do not say this with the levity of ignorance, as if presuming, as a matter of course, that in a small territory, such as Denmark, *e.g.*, the literature must, of necessity, bear a value proportioned to its political rank. On the contrary, I have some acquaintance with the Danish literature[1]; and, though,

[1] I take this opportunity of mentioning a curious fact which I ascertained about twelve years ago, when studying the Danish. The English and Scotch philologists have generally asserted that the Danish invasions in the ninth and tenth centuries, and their settlements in various parts of the islands (as Lincolnshire, Cumberland, &c.), had

in the proper sense of the word literature as a body of creative art, I cannot esteem it highly, yet as a depository of knowledge in one particular direction—namely, the direction of historical and antiquarian research—it has, undoubtedly, high claims upon the student's attention. But this is a direction in which a long series of writers descending from a remote antiquity is of more importance than a great contemporary body; whereas, for the cultivation of knowledge in a more comprehensive sense, and arrived at its present stage, large simultaneous efforts are of more importance than the longest successive efforts. Now, for such a purpose, it is self-evident that the means at the disposal of every State must be in due proportion to its statistical rank; for not only must the scientific institutions, the purchasers of books, &c., keep pace with the general progress of the country, but commerce alone, and the arts of life, which are so much benefited by science, naturally react upon science in a degree proportioned to the wealth of every State in their demand for the aids of chemistry, mechanics, engineering, &c. &c.; a fact, with its inevitable results, to which I need scarcely call your attention. Moreover, waiving all mere presumptive arguments, the bare amount of books annually published in the several countries of Europe puts the matter out of all doubt that the great commerce of thought and knowledge in the civilized world is at this day conducted in three languages —the English, the German, and the French. You, there-

left little or no traces of themselves in the language. This opinion has been lately reasserted in Dr. Murray's work on the European Languages. [See footnote, *ante*, p. 34.—M.] It is, however, inaccurate. For the remarkable dialect spoken amongst the lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland, together with the names of the mountains, tarns, &c., most of which resist all attempts to unlock their meaning from the Anglo-Saxon, or any other form of the Teutonic, are pure Danish—generally intelligible from the modern Danish of this day, but in all cases from the elder form of the Danish. Whenever my *Opera Omnia* are collected, I shall reprint a little memoir on this subject, which I inserted about four years ago in a provincial newspaper [the *Westmoreland Gazette*, which De Quincey edited in 1819. —M.]: or possibly, before that event, for the amusement of the lake tourists, Mr. Wordsworth may do me the favour to accept it as an appendix to his work on the English Lakes. [Among De Quincey's contributions in his last years to the Edinburgh periodical called *Titan* was a little paper entitled "The Lake Dialect."—M.]

fore, having the good fortune to be an Englishman, are to make your choice between the two last; and, this being so, I conceive that there is no room for hesitation,—the "detur pulchriori" being, in this case (that is, remember, with an exclusive reference to *knowledge*), a direction easily followed.

Dr. Johnson was accustomed to say of the French literature, as the kindest thing he had to say about it, that he valued it chiefly for this reason—that it had a book upon every subject. How far this might be a reasonable opinion fifty years ago, and understood, as Dr. Johnson must have meant it, of the French literature as compared with the English of the same period, I will not pretend to say. It has certainly ceased to be true even under these restrictions, and is in flagrant opposition to the truth if extended to the French in its relation to the German. Undoubtedly the French literature holds out to the student some peculiar advantages, as what literature does not?—some, even, which we should not have anticipated; for, though we justly value ourselves as a nation upon our classical education, yet no literature is poorer than the English in the learning of classical antiquities: our Bentleys even, and our Porsons, having thrown all their learning into the channel of philology; whilst a single volume of the Memoirs of the French Academy of Inscriptions contains more useful antiquarian research than a whole English library. In digests of history, again, the French language is richer than ours, and in their dictionaries of miscellaneous knowledge (*not* in their encyclopædias). But all these are advantages of the French only in relation to the English and not to the German literature, which, for vast compass, variety, and extent, far exceeds all others as a depository for the current accumulations of knowledge. The mere number of books published annually in Germany, compared with the annual product of France and England, is alone a satisfactory evidence of this assertion. With relation to France, it is a second argument in its favour that the intellectual activity of Germany is not intensely accumulated in one great capital, as it is in Paris; but, whilst it is here and there converged intensely enough for all useful purposes (as at Berlin, Konigsberg, Leipsic, Dresden, Vienna, Munich, &c.), it is also healthily diffused

over the whole territory. There is not a sixth-rate town in Protestant Germany which does not annually contribute its quota of books: intellectual culture has manured the whole soil: not a district but it has penetrated,

"Like Spring,
Which leaves no corner of the land untouched."

A third advantage on the side of Germany (an advantage for this purpose) is its division into a great number of independent states. From this circumstance it derives the benefit of an internal rivalship amongst its several members, over and above that general external rivalship which it maintains with other nations. An advantage of the same kind we enjoy in England. The British nation is fortunately split into three great divisions, and thus a national feeling of emulation and contest is excited,—slight, indeed, or none at all on the part of the English (not from any merit, but from mere decay of patriotic feeling), stronger on the part of the Irish, and sometimes illiberally and odiously strong on the part of the Scotch (especially as you descend below the rank of gentlemen). But, disgusting as it sometimes is in its expression, this nationality is of great service to our efforts in all directions. A triple power is gained for internal excitement of the national energies; whilst, in regard to any external enemy or any external rival, the three nations act with the unity of a single force. But the most conspicuous advantage of the German literature is its great originality and boldness of speculation, and the character of masculine austerity and precision impressed upon their scientific labours by the philosophy of Leibnitz and Wolff heretofore, and by the severer philosophy of modern days. Speaking of the German literature at all, it would be mere affectation to say nothing on a subject so far-famed and so much misrepresented as this. Yet, to summon myself to an effort of this kind at a moment of weariness and exhausted attention would be the certain means of inflicting great weariness upon you. For the present, therefore, I take my leave, and am most truly yours,

X. Y. Z.

LETTER V

ON THE ENGLISH NOTICES OF KANT

My dear Sir,—In my last letter, having noticed the English, the German, and the French, as the three languages in which the great commerce of thought and knowledge in the civilized world is at this day conducted, and having attributed three very considerable advantages to the German as compared with the French, I brought forward in conclusion, as an advantage more conspicuous even than any I had before insisted on, the great originality and boldness of speculation which have distinguished the philosophic researches of Germany for the last hundred and fifty years.[1] On this point, as it stood opposed to some prejudices and gross mis-statements among ourselves, I naturally declined to speak at the close of a letter which had, perhaps, already exhausted your attention. But, as it would be mere affectation wholly to evade a question about which so much interest[2] has gathered, and an interest which, from its objects and grounds, must be so durable, I gave you reason to expect that I would say a few words on that which is at this time understood by the term *German Philosophy*,—that is, the philosophy of Kant. This I shall now do. But let me remind you for what purpose, that you may not lay to my charge, as a fault, that limited notice of my subject which the nature and proportions of my plan prescribe. In a short letter it cannot be supposed possible, if it were otherwise right on this occasion, that I should undertake an

[1] Dating from the earliest works of Leibnitz, rather more. [The earliest philosophical publication of Leibnitz was in 1664.—M.]

[2] I have heard it alleged as a reason why no great interest in the German Philosophy can exist or can be created amongst the English that "there is no demand for books on that subject": in which remark there is a singular confusion of thought. Was there any "demand" for the Newtonian Philosophy until the Newtonian philosophy appeared? How should there be any "demand" for books which do not exist? But, considering the lofty pretensions of the Kantean philosophy, it would argue a gross ignorance of human nature to suppose that no interest had already attended the statement of these pretensions whenever they have been made known; and, in fact, amongst thoughtful and intellectual men a very deep interest has long existed on the subject, as my own experience has been sufficient to

analysis of a philosophy so comprehensive as to leave no track of legitimate interests untouched, and so profound as to presuppose many preparatory exercises of the understanding. What the course of my subject demands is that I should liberate the name and reputation of the Kantean philosophy from any delusion which may collect about its purposes and pretensions through the representations of those who have spoken of it amongst ourselves. The case is this:—I have advised you to pay a special attention to the German literature, as a literature of knowledge, not of power; and, amongst other reasons for this advice, I have alleged the high character and pretensions of its philosophy. But these pretensions have been met by attacks, or by gross misrepresentations, from all writers within my knowledge who have at all noticed the philosophy in this country. So far as these have fallen in your way, they must naturally have indisposed you to my advice; and it becomes, therefore, my business to point out any facts which may tend to disarm the authority of these writers, just so far as to replace you in the situation of a neutral and unprejudiced student.

The persons who originally introduced the Kantean philosophy to the notice of the English public, or rather attempted to do so, were two Germans—Dr. Willich and (not long after) Dr. Nitsch. Dr. Willich, I think, has been gone to Hades for these last dozen years; certainly his works have: and Dr. Nitsch, though not gone to Hades, is gone (I understand) to Germany,—which answers my purpose as well; for it is not likely that a few words uttered in London will

convince me. Indeed, what evidence could be alleged more strong of apathy and decay in all intellectual activity, and in all honourable direction of intellectual interests, than the possibility that a systematic philosophy should arise in a great nation near to our own, and should claim to have settled for ever many of the weightiest questions which concern the dignity and future progress of the human species, and should yet attract no attention or interest? We may be assured that no nation not thoroughly emasculated in power of mind—that is, so long as any severe studies survive amidst her—can ever be so far degraded. But these judgments come of attending too much to the movements of what is called "the literary world." Literature very imperfectly represents the intellectual interests of any people; and literary people are, in a large proportion, as little intellectual people as any one meets with.

contrive to find out a man buried in the throng of thirty million Germans. *Quoad hoc*, therefore, Dr. Nitsch may be considered no less defunct than Dr. Willich; and I can run no risk of wounding anybody's feelings if I should pronounce both doctors very eminent blockheads. It is difficult to say which wrote the more absurd book. Willich's is a mere piece of book-making, and deserves no sort of attention. But Nitsch, who seems to have been a painstaking man, has produced a work which is thus far worthy of mention, that it reflects as in a mirror one feature common to most of the German commentaries upon Kant's works, and which it is right to expose. With very few exceptions, these works are constructed upon one simple principle. Finding it impossible to obtain any glimpse of Kant's meaning or drift, the writers naturally asked themselves what was to be done. Because a man does not understand one iota of his author, is he therefore not to comment upon him? That were hard indeed, and a sort of abstinence which it is more easy to recommend than to practise. Commentaries must be written; and, if not by those who understand the system (which would be the best plan), then (which is clearly the second-best plan) by those who do *not* understand it. Dr. Nitsch belonged to this latter very respectable body, for whose great numerical superiority to their rivals I can take upon myself to vouch. Being of their body, the worthy doctor adopted their expedient, which is simply this: never to deliver any doctrine except in the master's words; on all occasions to parrot the *ipsissima verba* of Kant; and not even to venture upon the experiment of a new illustration drawn from their own funds. Pretty nearly upon this principle was it that the wretched Brucker and others have constructed large Histories of Philosophy.[1] Having no comprehension of the inner meaning and relations of any philosophic opinion, nor suspecting to what it tended, or in what necessities of the intellect it had arisen, how could the man do more than superstitiously adhere to that formula of words in which it had pleased the philosopher to clothe it? It was unreasonable to expect he should. To require of him that he should

[1] John James Brucker, German, 1696-1770. His *Critical History of Philosophy* was published in 1741-44 in five volumes quarto.—M.

present it in any new aspect of his own devising would have been tempting him into dangerous and perplexing situations: it would have been, in fact, a downright aggression upon his personal safety, and calling upon him to become *felo de se*. Every turn of a sentence might risk his breaking down; and no man is bound to risk his neck, credit, or understanding, for the benefit of another man's neck, credit, or understanding. "It's all very well," Dr. Nitsch and his brethren will say,—"it's all very well for you, gentlemen, that have no commenting to do, to understand your author; but, to expect us to understand him also, that have to write commentaries on him for two, four, and all the way up to twelve, volumes 8vo, just serves to show how far the unreasonableness of human nature can go." The Doctor was determined on moral principles to make no compromise with such unreasonableness, and, in common with all his brethren, set his face against understanding each and every chapter, paragraph, or sentence, of Kant, so long as they were expected to do duty as commentators. I treat the matter ludicrously; but, in substance, I assure you that I do no wrong to the learned commentators[1]; and, under such auspices, you will not suppose that Kant came before the English public with any advantage of patronage. Between two such supporters as a Nitsch on the right hand and a Willich on the left, I know not *that* philosopher that would escape foundering. But, fortunately for Kant, the supporters themselves foundered; and no man that ever I met with had seen or heard of their books, or seen any man that *had* seen them. It did not appear that they were, or, logically speaking, could be, forgotten; for no man had ever remembered them.

[1] Under this denomination I comprehend all the rabble of abbreviators, abstractors, dictionary-makers, etc. etc., attached to the establishment of the Kantean philosophy. One of the last, by the way, Schmidt, the author of a Kantean dictionary, may be cited as the *beau idéal* of Kantean commentators. He was altogether agreed with Dr. Nitsch upon the duty of not understanding one's author, and acted up to his principle through life—being, in fact, what the Cambridge men call a *Bergen-op-zoom*, that is, one that sturdily defies his author, stands a siege of twelve or twenty years upon his understanding, and holds out to the last, impregnable to all the assaults of reason or argument, and the heaviest batteries of common sense.

The two doctors having thus broken down, and set off severally to Hades and Germany, I recollect no authors of respectability who have since endeavoured to attract the attention of the English public to the Kantean philosophy, except—1. An anonymous writer in an early number of the *Edinburgh Review*, 2. Mr. Coleridge, 3. Mr. Dugald Stewart, 4. Madame de Staël, in a work published, I believe, originally in this country, and during her residence amongst us. I do not add Sir William Drummond to this list, because my recollection of anything he has written on the subject of Kant (in his Academical Questions) is very imperfect; nor Mr. W——, the reputed author of an article on Kant (the most elaborate, I am told, which at present exists in the English language) in the Encyclopædia Londinensis; for this essay, together with a few other notices of Kant in other encyclopædias, or elsewhere, has not happened to fall in my way. The four writers above mentioned were certainly the only ones in this subject who commanded sufficient influence, either directly in their own persons, or (as in the first case) vicariously in the channel through which the author communicated with the public, considerably to affect the reputation of Kant in this country for better or worse. None of the four, except Mr. Coleridge, having, or professing to have, any direct acquaintance with the original works of Kant, but drawing their information from imbecile French books, &c., it would not be treating the other three with any injustice to dismiss their opinions without notice; for, even upon any one philosophical question, much more upon the fate of a great philosophical system supposed to be *sub judice*, it is as unworthy of a grave and thoughtful critic to rely upon the second-hand report of a flashy rhetorician as it would be unbecoming and extrajudicial in a solemn trial to occupy the ear of the court with the gossip of a country town.

However, to omit no point of courtesy to any of these writers, I shall say a word or two upon each of them separately. The first and the third wrote in a spirit of hostility to Kant; the second and fourth, as friends. In that order I shall take them. The writer of the article in the *Edinburgh Review*, I suppose, upon the internal evidence,

to have been the late Dr. Thomas Brown, a pupil of Mr. Dugald Stewart's, and his successor in the Moral Philosophy chair at Edinburgh.[1] This is a matter of no importance in itself; nor am I in the habit of troubling myself or others with literary gossip of that sort; but I mention it as a conjecture of my own; because, if I happen to be right, it would be a very singular fact that the only two writers within my knowledge who have so far forgot the philosophic character as to attempt an examination of a vast and elaborate system of philosophy not in the original, not in any authorized or accredited Latin version (of which there were two even at that time), not in any version at all, but in the tawdry rhetoric of a Parisian *philosophie à la mode*, a sort of *philosophie pour les dames*,—that these two writers, thus remarkably agreeing in their readiness to forget the philosophic character, should also happen to have stood nearly connected in literary life. In such coincidences we suspect something more than a blind accident; we suspect the natural tendency of their philosophy, and believe ourselves furnished with a measure of its power to liberate the mind from rashness, from caprice, and injustice, in such deliberate acts, which it either suggests or tolerates. If their own philosophic curiosity was satisfied with information so slender, mere justice required that they should not, on so slight and suspicious a warrant, have grounded anything in disparagement of the philosophy or its founder. The book reviewed by the Edinburgh reviewer, and relied on for his account of the Kantean philosophy, is the essay of Villars; a book so entirely childish that perhaps no mortification more profound could have fallen upon the reviewer than the discovery of the extent to which he had been duped by his author. Of this book no more needs to be said than that the very terms do not occur in it which express the hinges of the system. Mr. Stewart has confided chiefly in Dégérando; a much more sober-minded author, of more good sense, and a greater zeal for truth, but, unfortunately, with no more ability to penetrate below the

[1] See *ante*, Vol. VIII, p. 87 and footnote. Brown succeeded Stewart in the active duties of the Moral Philosophy Professorship in 1810, and died in 1820, three years before the date of this reference to him.—M.

surface of the Kantean system.[1] M. Dégérando is represented as an unexceptionable evidence by Mr. Stewart, on the ground that he is admitted to be so by Kant's "countrymen." The "countrymen" of Kant,[2] merely *as* countrymen, can have no more title to an opinion upon this point than a Grantham man could have a right to dogmatize on Sir Isaac Newton's philosophy on the ground that he was a fellow-townsman of Sir Isaac's. The air of Königsberg makes no man a philosopher. But, if Mr. Stewart means that the competency of M. Dégérando has been admitted by those countrymen of Kant's whose educations have fitted them to understand him, and whose writings make it evident that they *have* understood him (such, for instance, as Reinhold, Schulze, Tieftrunk, Beck, Fichte, and Schelling), then he has been misinformed. The mere existence of such works as the *Histoire Comparée* of M. Dégérando, which cannot be regarded in a higher light than that of verbal indices to the *corpus philosophiæ*, is probably unknown to them; certainly, no books of that popular class are ever noticed by any of them, nor could rank higher in their eyes than an elementary school algebra in the eyes of a mathematician. If any man acknowledges Dégérando's attempt at a popular abstract of Kant as a sound one, *ipso facto* he degrades himself from the right to any opinion upon the matter. The elementary notions of Kant, even the main problem of his great work, are not once so much as alluded to by Dégérando. And, by the way, if any man ever talks in your presence about Kant, and you suspect that he is talking without knowledge, and wish to put a stop to him, I will tell you how you shall effect that end. Say to him as follows:—"Sir, I am in-

[1] Marie, Baron Dégérando (1772-1842). His *Histoire Comparée des Systèmes de Philosophie* was published in 1803.—M.

[2] The reader may suppose that this could not possibly have been the meaning of Mr. Stewart. But a very general mistake exists as to the terminology of Kant—as though a foreigner must find some difficulties in it which are removed to a native. "His own countrymen," says a respectable literary journal, when speaking of Kant (*Edinburgh Monthly Review* for August 1820, p. 168)—"His own countrymen find it difficult to comprehend his meaning; and they dispute about it to this day." Why not? The terminology of Kant is partly Grecian, partly scholastic; and how should either become intelligible to a German *qua* German merely because they are fitted with German terminations and inflexions?

structed by my counsel, learned in this matter, that the main problem of the philosophy you are talking of lies involved in the term *transcendental*, and that it may be thus expressed: '*An detur aliquid transcendentale in mente humana*,'—'Is there in the human mind anything which realizes the notion of *transcendental* (as that notion is regulated and used by Kant)?' Now, as this makes it necessary above all things to master that notion in the fullest sense, I will thank you to explain it to me. And, as I am further instructed that the answer to this question is affirmative, and is involved in the term *synthetic unity*, I will trouble you to make it clear to me wherein the difference lies between this and what is termed *analytic unity*." Thus speaking, you will in all probability gag him; which is, at any rate, one desirable thing gained when a man insists on disturbing a company by disputing and talking philosophy.

But, to return: as there must always exist a strong presumption against philosophy of Parisian manufacture (which is in that department the Birmingham ware of Europe); secondly, as M. Dégérando had expressly admitted (in fact, boasted) that he had a little trimmed and embellished the Kantean system, in order to fit it for the society of "*les gens comme il faut*"; and, finally, as there were Latin versions, &c., of Kant: it must reasonably occur to any reader to ask why Mr. Stewart should not have consulted these. To this question Mr. Stewart answers that he could not tolerate their "barbarous" style and nomenclature. I must confess that in such an answer I see nothing worthy of a philosopher, and should rather have looked for it from a literary *petit-maître* than from an emeritus Professor of Moral Philosophy.[1] Will a philosopher decline a useful experiment in physics because it will soil his kid gloves? Who thinks or cares about style in such studies that is sincerely and anxiously in quest of truth?[2] In fact, *style*, in any proper sense, is no more a

[1] Dugald Stewart, who had been Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh since 1785, retired from the active duties of the chair in 1810, but lived till 1828.—M.

[2] The diction of the particular book which had been recommended to Mr. Stewart's attention,—namely, the *Expositio Systematica* of Phiseldek, a Danish professor,—has all the merits which a philosophic diction can have, being remarkably perspicuous, precise, simple, and

possible thing in such investigations as the understanding is summoned to by Kant than it is in Euclid's Elements. As to the nomenclature again, supposing that it *had* been barbarous, who objects to the nomenclature of modern chemistry, which is, *quoad materiam*, not only a barbarous, but a hybrid nomenclature? Wherever law and intellectual order prevail, they *debarbarize* (if I may be allowed such a coinage) what in its elements might be barbarous: the form ennobles the matter. But how is the Kantean terminology barbarous, which is chiefly composed of Grecian or Latin terms? In constructing it Kant proceeded in this way:—Where it was possible, he recalled obsolete and forgotten terms from the Platonic Philosophy and from the Schoolmen, or restored words abused by popular use to their original philosophic meaning. In other cases, when there happen to exist double expressions for the same notion, he called in and reminted them, as it were. In doing this he was sometimes forestalled in part, and guided by the tendency of language itself. All languages, as it has been remarked, tend to clear themselves of synonymes as intellectual culture advances,—the superfluous words being taken up and appropriated by new shades and combinations of thought evolved in the progress of society. And, long before this appropriation is fixed and petrified, as it were, into the acknowledged vocabulary of the language, an insensible *clinamen* (to borrow a Lucretian word) prepares the way for it. Thus, for instance, long before Mr. Wordsworth had unveiled the great philosophic distinction between the powers of *fancy* and *imagination*, the two words had begun to diverge from each other; the first being used to express a faculty somewhat capricious[1] and exempted from law, the latter to express a faculty more self-determined. When, therefore, it was at length perceived that under an apparent unity of meaning there lurked a real dualism, and for philosophic purposes it was necessary that this distinction

unaffected. It is too much of a mere metaphrase of Kant, and has too little variety of illustration: otherwise I do not know a better digest of the philosophy.

[1] Which distinction comes out still more strongly in the secondary derivative *fanciful*, and the primary derivative *fantastic*. I say primary derivative, in reference to the history of the word:—1, φαντασια, whence *phantasy*: 2, for metrical purposes, *phant'sy* (as it is

should have its appropriate expression, this necessity was met half-way by the *clinamen* which had already affected the popular usage of the words. So, again, in the words *Deist* and *Theist*: naturally, they should express the same notion, the one to a Latin, the other to a Grecian ear. But of what use are such duplicates? It is well that the necessities of the understanding gradually reach all such cases by that insensible *clinamen* which fits them for a better purpose than that of extending the mere waste fertility of language,—namely, by taking them up into the service of thought. In this instance *Deist* was used pretty generally throughout Europe to express the case of him who admits a God, but under the fewest predicates that will satisfy the conditions of the understanding. A *Theist*, on the other hand, even in popular use, denoted him who admits a God with some further (transcendental) predicates; as, for example, under the relation of a moral governor to the world. In such cases as this, therefore, where Kant found himself already anticipated by the progress of language, he did no more than regulate and ordinate the evident *nisus* and tendency of the popular usage into a severe definition. Where, however, the notions were of too subtle a nature to be laid hold of by the popular understanding, and too little within the daily use of life to be ever affected by the ordinary causes which mould the course of a language, there he commenced and finished the process of separation himself.

And what were the uses of all this? Why, the uses were these:—*First*, in relation to the whole system of the transcendental philosophy: the new notions which were thus fixed and recorded were necessary to the system; they were useful in proportion as *that* was useful,—that is, in proportion as it was true. *Secondly*, they extended the domain of human thought, apart from the system and independently of it. A perpetual challenge or summons is held out to the mind in

usually spelt in Sylvester's *Du Bartas*, and other scholarlike poems of that day): 3, by dropping the *t* in pronunciation, phansy or fancy. Now, from No. 1 comes *fantastic*; from No. 3 comes *fanciful*. [Sylvester's *Du Bartas*—*i.e.* the English translation by Joshua Sylvester of the *Days and Weeks* of the French Huguenot poet Du Bartas,—was an immensely popular book in the first half of the seventeenth century.—M.]

the Kantean terminology to clear up and regulate its own conceptions, which, without discipline, are apt from their own subtle affinities to blend and run into each other. The new distinctions are so many intellectual problems to be mastered. And, even without any view to a formal study of the transcendental philosophy, great enlargement would be given to the understanding by going through a Kantean dictionary, well explained and well illustrated.[1] This terminology, therefore, was useful: 1. As a means to an end (being part of the system); 2. As an end in itself. So much for the uses. As to the power of mind put forth in constructing it (between which and the uses lies the valuation of Kant's service; for, if no uses, then we do not thank him for any difficulty he may have overcome; if no difficulty overcome, then we do not ascribe as a merit to him any uses which may flow from it),—as to the power of mind put forth in constructing it, I do not think it likely that you will make the same mistake which I have heard from some unreflecting persons, and which, in fact, lurks at the bottom of much that has been written against Kant's obscurity, as though Kant had done no more than impose new names. Certainly, if that were all, the merit would not be very conspicuous. It would cost little effort of mind to say, Let this be A, and that be D: let this notion be called *transcendent*, and that be called *transcendental*. Such a statement, however, supposes the ideas to be already known and familiar, and simply to want names. In this lies the blunder. When Kant assigned the names, he created the ideas; that is, he drew them within the consciousness. In assigning to the complex notion X the name *transcendental*, Kant was not simply transferring a word which had previously been used by the schoolmen to a more useful office; he was bringing into the service of the intellect a new birth; that is, drawing into a synthesis, which had not existed before *as* a synthesis, parts or elements which exist and come forward hourly in every man's mind. I urge this upon your attention, because you will often hear such challenges thrown out as

[1] In some cases it is true that the construction of the ideas is posterior to the system, and presupposes a knowledge of it, rather than precedes it; but this is not generally true.

this (or others involving the same error), "Now, if there be any sense in this Mr. Kant's writings, let us have it in good old mother-English." That is, in other words, transfer into the unscientific language of life scientific notions and relations which it is not fitted to express. The challenger proceeds upon the common error of supposing all ideas fully developed to exist *in esse* in all understandings,—*ergo*, in his own; and all that are in his own he thinks that we can express in English. Thus the challenger, on his notions, has you in a dilemma, at any rate; for, if you do not translate it, then it confirms his belief that the whole is jargon; if you *do* (as, doubtless, with the help of much periphrasis, you may translate it into English that will be intelligible to a man who already understands the philosophy), then where was the use of the new terminology? But the way to deal with this fellow is as follows:—"My good sir, I shall do what you ask; but, before I do it, I beg that you will oblige me by—1, translating this mathematics into the language of chemistry; 2, by translating this chemistry into the language of mathematics; 3, both into the language of cookery; and, finally, solve me the Cambridge problem, 'Given the captain's name, and the year of our Lord, to determine the longitude of the ship.'" This is the way to deal with such fellows.

The terminology of Kant, then, is not a rebaptism of ideas already existing in the universal consciousness; it is in part an enlargement of the understanding by new territory (of which I have spoken), and in part a better regulation of its old territory. This regulation is either negative, and consists in limiting more accurately the boundary-line of conceptions that had hitherto been imperfectly defined; or it is positive, and consists in the substitutions of names which express the relations and dependencies of the object [1] (*termini*

[1] In a conversation which I once had with the late Bishop of Llandaff [see *ante*, Vol. II, pp. 194-203] on the subject of Kant, he objected chiefly to the terminology, and assigned as one instance of what seemed to him needless innovations the word *apperception*. "If this word means self-consciousness," said he, "I do not see why Mr. Kant might not have contented himself with what contented his father." But the truth is that this word exactly illustrates the explanation made above; it expresses one fact in a system *sub ratione*, and with a retrospect to another. This would have been the apology for the

organici) for the conventional names which have arisen from accident, and do *not* express those relations (*termini bruti*). It is on this principle that the nomenclature of chemistry is constructed : substances that were before known by arbitrary and non-significant names are now known by systematic names ; that is, such as express their relations to other parts of the system. In this way a terminology becomes, in a manner, organic ; and, being itself a product of an advanced state of the science, is an important re-agent for facilitating further advances.

These are the benefits of a sound terminology ; to which let me add that no improved terminology can ever be invented —nay, hardly any plausible one—which does not presuppose an improved theory. Now, surely benefits such as these ought to outweigh any offence to the ears or the taste, if there were any. But the elegance of coherency is the sole elegance which a terminology needs to possess, or indeed can possess. The understanding is, in this case, the arbiter ; and, where *that* approves, it must be a misplaced fastidiousness of feeling which does not submit itself to the presiding faculty. As an instance of a repulsive terminology, I would cite that of Aristotle, which has something harsh and technical in it that prevents it from ever blending with the current of ordinary language. Even to this, however, so far as it answers its purposes, the mind soon learns to reconcile itself. But here, as in other more important points, the terminology of Kant is advantageously distinguished from the Aristotelian, by adapting itself with great ductility to any variety of structure and arrangement incident to a philosophic diction.

I have spoken so much at length on the subject of Kant's terminology, because this is likely to be the first stumbling-block to the student of his philosophy ; and because it has been in fact the main subject of attack amongst those who have noticed it in this country ; if *that* can be called attack

word. However, in this particular instance, I chose rather to apologize for Kant, by alleging that Wolff and Leibnitz had used the word ; so that it was an established word before the birth of the transcendental philosophy, and it might, therefore, be doubted whether Mr. Kant senior *had* contented himself in this case with less than Mr. Kant junior.

which proceeds in acknowledged ignorance of the original works.

A much more serious attack upon Kant has been the friendly notice of Madame de Staël.[1] The sources from which she drew her opinions were understood to be the two Schlegels, and, probably, M. Dégérando. Like some countrymen of Kant's (*e.g.* Kiesewetter), she has contrived to translate his philosophy into a sense which leaves it tolerably easy to apprehend; but unfortunately at the expense of all definite purpose, applicability, or philosophic meaning. On the other hand, Mr. Coleridge, whose great philosophic powers and undoubted acquaintance with the works of Kant would have fitted him beyond any man to have explained them to the English student, has unfortunately too little talent for teaching or communicating any sort of knowledge, and apparently too little simplicity of mind or zealous desire to do so. Hence it has happened that, so far from assisting Kant's progress in this country, Mr. Coleridge must have retarded it by expounding the oracle in words of more Delphic obscurity than the German original could have presented to the immaturest student.[2] It is, moreover, characteristic of Mr. Coleridge's mind that it never gives back anything as it receives it. All things are modified and altered in passing through his thoughts; and from this cause, I believe, combined with his aversion to continuous labour, arises his indisposition to mathematics; for *that* he must be content to take as he finds it. Now, this indocility of mind greatly unfits a man to be the faithful expounder of a philosophic system; and it has, in fact, led Mr. Coleridge to make various misrepresentations of Kant. One only, as it might indispose you to pay any attention to Kant, I shall notice. In one of his works he has ascribed to Kant the foppery of an exoteric and an esoteric doctrine, and that upon grounds wholly untenable. The direct and simple-minded Kant, I am persuaded, would have been more shocked at this

[1] Madame de Staël's celebrated work *De l'Allemagne* was published in London by Murray in 1813 in three volumes. An English translation of it appeared in the same year.—M.

[2] The reference must be chiefly to Chapter IX of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, where Kant and other German philosophers are mentioned.—M.

suspicion than any other with which he could have been loaded.

I throw the following remarks together as tending to correct some of the deepest errors with which men come to the examination of philosophic systems, whether as students or as critics :—

1. A good terminology will be one of the first results from a good theory ; and hence, though a coherent terminology is not a sufficient evidence in favour of a system, the absence of such a terminology is a sufficient evidence against it.

2. It is asked which is the true philosophy. But this is not the just way of putting the question. The purpose of philosophy is not so much to accumulate positive truths in the first place as to rectify the position of the human mind, and to correct its mode of seeing. The progress of the human species in this path is not direct, but oblique. One philosophy does not differ from another solely by the amount of truth and error which it brings forward ; there is none which has ever had much interest for the human mind but will be found to contain some truth of importance, or some approximation to it. One philosophy has differed from another rather by the station it has taken, and the aspect under which it has contemplated its object.

3. It has been objected to Kant, by some critics in this country, that his doctrines are, in some instances, reproductions only of doctrines brought forward by other philosophers. The instances alleged have been very unfortunate ; but, doubtless, whatsoever truth is contained (according to the last remark) in the erroneous systems, and sometimes in the very errors themselves of the human mind, will be gathered up in its progress by the true system. Where the erroneous path has wandered in all directions, has returned upon itself perpetually, and crossed the field of inquiry with its mazes in every direction, doubtless the path of truth will often intersect it, and perhaps for a short distance coincide with it ; but that in this coincidence it receives no impulse or determination from that with which it coincides will appear from the self-determining force which will soon carry it out of the same direction as inevitably as it entered it.

4. The test of a great philosophical system is often falsely conceived. Men fancy a certain number of great outstanding problems of the highest interest to human nature, upon which every system is required to try its strength ; and *that* will be the true one, they think, which solves them all, and *that* the best approximation to the true one which solves most. But this is a most erroneous way of judging. True philosophy will often have occasion to show that these supposed problems are no problems at all, but mere impositions of the mind upon itself, arising out of its unrectified position —errors grounded upon errors. A much better test of a sound philosophy than the number of the pre-existing problems which it solves will be the quality of those which it proposes. By raising the station of the spectator, it will bring a region of new inquiry within his view; and the very faculty of comprehending these questions will often depend on the station from which they are viewed. For, as the earlier and ruder problems that stimulate human curiosity often turn out baseless and unreal, so again the higher order of problems will be incomprehensible to the undisciplined understanding. This is a fact which should never be lost sight of by those who presume upon their natural and uncultivated powers of mind to judge of Kant, Plato, or any other great philosopher.

5. But the most general error which I have ever met with, as a ground for unreasonable expectations in reference not to Kant only, but to all original philosophers, is the persuasion which men have that their understandings contain already in full development all the notions which any philosophy can demand ; and this not from any vanity, but from pure misconception. Hence they naturally think that all which the philosopher has to do is to point to the elements of the knowledge as they exist ready prepared, and forthwith the total knowledge of the one is transferred to any other mind. Watch the efforts of any man to master a new doctrine in philosophy, and you will find that involuntarily he addresses himself to the mere dialectic labour of transposing, dissolving, and re-combining the notions which he already has. But it is not thus that any very important truth can be developed in the mind. New matter is wanted,

as well as new form. And the most important remark which I can suggest as a caution to those who approach a great system of philosophy as if it were a series of riddles and their answers, is this :—No complex or very important truth was ever yet transferred in full development from one mind to another. Truth of that character is not a piece of furniture to be shifted; it is a seed which must be sown, and pass through the several stages of growth. No doctrine of importance can be transferred in a matured shape into any man's understanding from without : it must arise by an act of genesis within the understanding itself.

With this remark I conclude, and am

Most truly yours,

X. Y. Z.

RHETORIC[1]

No art cultivated by man has suffered more in the revolutions of taste and opinion than the art of Rhetoric. There was a time when, by an undue extension of this term, it designated the whole cycle of accomplishments which prepared a man for public affairs. From that height it has descended to a level with the arts of alchemy and astrology, as holding out promises which consist in a mixed degree of impostures wherever its pretensions happened to be weighty, and of trifles wherever they happened to be true. If we look into the prevailing theory of Rhetoric, under which it meets with so degrading an estimate, we shall find that it fluctuates between two different conceptions, according to one of which it is an art of ostentatious ornament, and according to the other an art of sophistry. A man is held to play the rhetorician when he treats a subject with more than usual gaiety of ornament, and, perhaps we may add, as an essential element in the idea, with *conscious* ornament. This is one view of Rhetoric ; and under this what it accomplishes is not so much to persuade as to delight, not so much to win

[1] Suggested as an excursive review by Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric*. [Such is De Quincey's brief footnote to the title of the paper in his reprint of it in 1859 in vol. xi of his Collective Edition of his Writings. It had appeared originally in *Blackwood's Magazine* for December 1828, in the form of a review of Whately's well-known "Rhetoric," then a new book with the title "*Elements of Rhetoric. By Richard Whately, D.D., Principal of St. Albans Hall, and late Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford.*" In the magazine the paper itself bore the title "Elements of Rhetoric" ; but this title was shortened in the reprint.—M.]

the assent as to stimulate the attention and captivate the taste. And even this purpose is attached to something separable and accidental in the *manner*. But the other idea of Rhetoric lays its foundation in something essential to the *matter*. This is that rhetoric of which Milton spoke as able "to dash maturest counsels and to make the worse appear the better reason." Now, it is clear that *argument* of some quality or other must be taken as the principle of this rhetoric; for those must be immature counsels indeed that could be dashed by mere embellishments of manner, or by artifices of diction and arrangement.

Here then we have in popular use two separate ideas of Rhetoric: one of which is occupied with the general end of the fine arts—that is to say, intellectual pleasure; the other applies itself more specifically to a definite purpose of utility, viz. fraud.

Such is the popular idea of Rhetoric; which wants both unity and precision. If we seek these from the formal teachers of Rhetoric, our embarrassment is not much relieved. All of them agree that Rhetoric may be defined *the art of persuasion*. But, if we inquire what *is* persuasion, we find them vague and indefinite or even contradictory. To waive a thousand of others, Dr. Whately, in the work before us, insists upon the *conviction* of the understanding as "an essential part of persuasion"; and, on the other hand, the author of the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* is equally satisfied that there is no persuasion without an appeal to the *passions*.[1] Here are two views. We, for our parts, have a third which excludes both. Where conviction begins, the field of Rhetoric ends; that is our opinion: and, as to the passions, we contend that they are not within the province of Rhetoric, but of Eloquence.[2]

[1] The Scottish theologian and critic, Dr. George Campbell, Principal of Marischal College and University, Aberdeen (1719-1796); whose *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, published in 1776, is one of the shrewdest books on the Principles of Style and Literature produced in Great Britain in the course of the eighteenth century.—M.

[2] As these opening paragraphs of the paper seem to imply an imperfect recollection of the contents and substance of Aristotle's Treatise on Rhetoric, and a hazy conception of the causes of the change of meaning which the word "Rhetoric" has undergone in its

In this view of Rhetoric and its functions we coincide with Aristotle; as indeed originally we took it up on a suggestion derived from him. But, as all parties may possibly fancy a confirmation of their views in Aristotle, we will say a word or two in support of our own interpretation

descent from the Greek and Roman world into modern times, a few words may here be interposed by way of elucidation and addition:—Rhetoric, as understood by Aristotle, and by all his Greek and Roman successors, was the Science and Art of Oratory. It was the Science and Art of persuasion by means of speech,—whether by that actual method of direct address to an audience face to face which we usually call "public speaking," or, more obliquely, by written pleadings which might be read in private. Now, as there were three recognised kinds of oratory in the ancient world,—the oratory of political assemblies, the oratory of law-courts, and that third and rarer kind of oratory the sole purpose of which was some immediate moral effect upon the hearers,—the distribution of the Ancient Rhetoric corresponded. The oratory of political assemblies, or all oratory of what we should now call the Parliamentary type, was distinguished by Aristotle as *Symbouleutic Oratory*, the Latin equivalent of which was *Deliberative Oratory*; the oratory of law-courts was called *Dikanic Oratory* by the Greeks, and *Judicial or Forensic Oratory* by the Latins; and the third kind of oratory, or such oratory as most nearly resembled our oratory of the pulpit, was called *Epideictic Oratory* by the Greeks, and *Demonstrative Oratory* by the Latins. The ancient orators having to practise all the three kinds as occasion offered, and the functions of the orator or public speaker having been far more extensive and continual in the system of ancient society than they are now, it happened naturally that Rhetoric assumed a most important place in the business of education among the ancients. It was, in fact, all but co-extensive with the *whole* business of education; for, as De Quincey remarks, "it designated the whole cycle of accomplishments which prepared a man for public affairs." Philosophy, on the one hand, it is true, and Poetry on the other, were recognised as high forms of private intellectual activity for those who were at leisure; but it was by oratory that a man exerted public influence, and rose to eminence and statesmanship. Hence the extraordinary elaborateness of the Science and Art of Rhetoric as set forth in Aristotle's treatise, and subsequently expounded and developed by such Roman masters as Cicero and Quintilian. The instruction of a young man in Rhetoric included, or presupposed, in their view, in the first place, instruction in all the kinds of *matter* or *doctrine* required in oratory. An orator must come to his special work adequately instructed in History, in Jurisprudence, in Political Economy, in Politics, in Ethics or Moral Philosophy, and in whatever other sort of knowledge might be necessary to him in his deliberative, forensic, or epideictic speeches. Thus Rhetoric included or presupposed much that may be described as the ancient equivalent to the teaching of our modern Universities.

of that author which will surprise our Oxford friends. Our explanation involves a very remarkable detection, which will tax many thousands of books with error in a particular point supposed to be as well established as the hills. We question, indeed, whether any fulminating powder, descending upon the schools of Oxford, would cause more consterna-

But it was in the theory of the ways of applying this acquired knowledge of all varieties to the special purposes of the orator's art that the Ancient Rhetoric reached its perfection. The following is a summary under that head :—The success of a speech on any particular occasion depends, according to Aristotle, on three things : viz. (1) the PISTIS, or combined strength of the *persuasives* found out for the occasion, the nature and amount of the means employed for getting the hearers to agree with the speaker and go along with him ; (2) the TAXIS, or right and orderly arrangement of the discourse ; (3) the LEXIS, or Style and Diction. In Aristotle's treatise each of these three subjects — PISTIS, TAXIS, LEXIS — is treated systematically ; but it is the part on the PISTIS that occupies most space, and that alone presents any points of difficulty. The PISTEIS or "means of persuasion" available for an orator on any occasion, but in greater or less proportion according to the circumstances, are classed by Aristotle as of these three varieties :—(1) *The Ethical Pistis*, consisting in those persuasives which are derived from the character, antecedents, and demeanour of the speaker himself,—his reputation for ability and integrity, his evident or seeming earnestness, &c. ; (2) *The Pathetic Pistis*, consisting in the orator's power to sway the passions of his audience,—to move them to pity, anger, &c.—and so to compel them to a different view of a case from that which would have recommended itself to their cool judgment ; (3) *The Logical Pistis*, consisting in the actual reasoning or argumentation, the address to the pure understanding.—Under this last head there was further subdivision ; to which we shall have to advert in another note ; but from the preceding sketch so far of the Ancient or Aristotelian Rhetoric it will be seen how the term "Rhetoric" has gradually lost its original meaning and acquired a new one. Aristotle, as has been said, does discuss the subject of Style or Diction as belonging properly to Rhetoric. He devotes twelve short chapters to this subject—containing remarks on the different kinds of style, on figures of speech, &c. ; and admirable little chapters they are, with hints and suggestions good to this day. Now, it is on these chapters, as the easiest and most popular portion of his treatise, to the neglect, or comparative neglect, of all the more abstruse and difficult parts, that modern taste has fastened. After training in oratory had ceased to be the main object or form of education, and especially after there had been devolved on the printing-press many of those oratorical functions which had formerly belonged to the living voice with some aid from annexed manuscript, people recollected but vaguely the more scientific solidities of the Ancient Rhetoric, and became interested chiefly in

tion than the explosion of that novelty which we are going to discharge.

Many years ago, when studying the Aristotelian Rhetoric at Oxford, it struck us that, by whatever name Aristotle might describe the main purpose of Rhetoric, practically, at least, in his own treatment of it, he threw the whole stress upon finding such arguments for any given thesis as, without positively proving or disproving it, should give it a

what it had taught on the special subject of Style or Literary Expression. So far there was a narrowing of the old idea or definition of Rhetoric. But the narrowing was compensated by a curious accompanying extension. Although what Aristotle had said on the subject of style had been said most directly for the behoof of the orator and with relation to *his* craft, did not most of it hold good for practitioners of the literary art in any form whatever,—for historians, or poets, or philosophers, as well as orators? Had not all these to employ *language* for their purposes; and would not any body of precepts for the use of language that served for the orator serve pretty well also, though with some necessary modifications perhaps, for the historical writer, the philosopher, or the poet? Thus all kinds of literature,—narrative literature in all its forms, poetry in all its forms, and all forms of expository or speculative literature,—were taken within the field of Rhetoric, so far as there might be principles of *diction* or literary expression common to them all; and, this having been done, it was easy to generalise still more by assuming for Rhetoric not only the charge of the *diction* in all kinds of literature, but also to some extent the charge of the *matter* or *intrinsic psychological substance* in each kind,—allowing Rhetoric to discuss, for example, such questions as the difference between wit and humour, the nature of the poetic imagination, the laws of tragic poetry or of any other species of poetry, and so in fact to annex to itself all that had been treated independently and separately by Aristotle in his POETICS, and by Horace in his DE ARTE POETICA.—Three definitions of Rhetoric have thus come down in competition with each other, or more or less in confusion: viz. I. The Ancient or Aristotelian definition, which made Rhetoric strictly the Art and Science of Oratory, spoken or written. II. That middle kind of definition which makes Rhetoric the Art and Science of Style or Diction for any literary purpose. III. A definition which would stretch Rhetoric into the Science of Literature, or of Literary Theory and Literary Criticism universally, and make it treat of the principles of Historical Writing, Poetry, and Expository Writing, as well as of Oratory. Whately endeavoured, on the whole, to revert to the old or Aristotelian definition; but the general modern drift has favoured one or other of the two other definitions, or perhaps a compromise between the second and the third. This in the main is De Quincey's position, though, as we shall see, he attempts a difference.—M.

colourable support. It could not be by accident that the topics, or general heads of argument, were never in an absolute and unconditional sense true, but contained so much of plausible or colourable truth as is expressed in the original meaning of the word *probable*. A *ratio probabilis*, in the Latin use of the word *probabilis*, is that ground of assent—not which the understanding can solemnly approve and abide by—but the very opposite to this ; one which it can submit to for a moment, and countenance as within the limits of the plausible.[1] That this was the real governing law of Aristotle's procedure it was not possible to doubt : but was it consciously known to himself? If so, how was it to be reconciled with his own formal account of the office of Rhetoric, so often repeated, that it consisted in finding enthymemes ?[2] What then was an Enthymeme ?

[1] It is ludicrous to see the perplexity of some translators and commentators of the Rhetoric, who, having read it under a false point of view, labour to defend it on that footing. On its real footing it needs no defence.

[2] This is an exaggeration of the proportions assigned to the Enthymeme in the Aristotelian Rhetoric. The Enthymeme is certainly of importance there ; but it is by no means the all-in-all there that one might infer it to have been from De Quincey's words. It came in more particularly at that point of Aristotle's survey of Rhetoric where he discussed the *Logical Pistis,—i.e.* that means of persuasion which consists in the actual ratiocination, the logical address to the pure understanding, which an orator may employ in support of his case (see footnote, *ante*, p. 84).—All Rhetorical reasoning, all the reasoning of common life, Aristotle explained, is, and can only be, of one or other of two kinds, corresponding severally to *induction* and *deduction* in Logic. Now, inductive reasoning in rhetoric, as in common life, is always in the form of *Paradigm* or *Example*, whereas deductive reasoning in rhetoric, as in common life, is always in the form of *Enthymeme* (i.e. *thought* or *maxim*). If an orator in any Greek city, observing that one of the leading citizens had been going about for some time attended by an armed body-guard, were to argue in the public assembly that this looked suspicious and indicated a design of forcibly seizing the tyranny or single and personal sovereignty in the state, and if that orator were to try to gain over his fellow-citizens to this view by reminding them of this and that well-remembered instance in previous Grecian history where a tyrant had prepared the way for his assumption of the tyranny by surrounding himself with a body-guard,—that would be *inductive reasoning* or reasoning by *Paradigm*. This kind of reasoning, in short, consists in the production of examples or like cases, which may shed probability on

Oxford! thou wilt think us mad to ask.[1] Certainly we knew, what all the world knows, that an enthymeme was understood to be a syllogism of which one proposition is suppressed—major, minor, or conclusion. But what possible relation had *that* to rhetoric? Nature sufficiently prompts all men to that sort of ellipsis; and what impertinence in a teacher to build his whole system upon a solemn precept to do this or that, when the rack would not have forced any man to do otherwise! Besides, Aristotle had represented it as the fault of former systems that they applied themselves exclusively to the treatment of the passions — an object

the view argued for. Reasoning by *Enthymeme*, or *deductive reasoning*, on the other hand, consists in first putting forth some general proposition or maxim likely to be assented to, and then bringing the particular case on hand under the cover of that proposition or maxim so as to partake of its plausibility. If, by way of fastening a charge of murder on the accused person at the bar, an advocate, in default of more direct evidence, were to advance the proposition that the murderer in any case of murder is likely to be some one who had an interest in the death of the murdered person, and were then to show that the prisoner was remarkably in this predicament with respect to the man whose murderer had to be discovered,—that, along with other arguments, might have some weight with the jury, and would at all events be an instance of *deductive reasoning* or *Enthymeme*.—So far it is not difficult to grasp the distinction; but the toughest and most obscure bit in all Aristotle's Rhetoric is undoubtedly that in which he defines the *Enthymeme* more minutely and specifies the varieties into which it may break itself. It is at this point that De Quincey comes in with his proposed correction of the traditional notion of the *Enthymeme*. It is acute and interesting, and will probably be more intelligible to the reader after this general explanation.—M.

[1] Whatever validity there may be in that correction of the traditional doctrine of the *Enthymeme* to which De Quincey now proceeds, he is certainly wrong in some of these introductory remarks. Not only, as has been shown in the preceding note, does he greatly exaggerate the place and proportions of the Enthymeme in Aristotle's Rhetoric; but he is wrong, utterly wrong, in the statement that Aristotle excluded from his Rhetoric all appeal to the passions. On the contrary, the PATHETIC PISTIS, or that means of persuasion to which an orator might help himself by powerful playing upon the feelings of his audience, was distinctly recognised by Aristotle and discussed by him at large (see footnote, *ante*, p. 84). One of the most curious and interesting portions of his Rhetoric, indeed, is a little Natural History of the Passions, or inventory of the ruling feelings of men, in youth, middle life, old age, &c., which he introduces in illustration of the PATHETIC PISTIS.—M.

foreign to the purpose of the rhetorician, who, in some situations, is absolutely forbidden by law to use any such arts: whereas, says he, his true and universal weapon is the enthymeme, which is open to him everywhere. Now, what opposition, or what relation of any kind, can be imagined between the system which he rejects and the one he adopts, if the enthymeme is to be understood as it usually has been? The rhetorician is not to address the passions, but—what? to mind that in all his arguments he suppresses one of his propositions! And these follies are put into the mouth of Aristotle!

In this perplexity a learned Scottish friend [1] communicated to us an Essay of Facciolati's, read publicly about a century ago (Nov. 1724), and entitled *De Enthymemate*,[2] in which he maintains that the received idea of the enthymeme is a total blunder, and triumphantly restores the lost idea. "Nego," says he, "nego enthymema esse syllogismum mutilum, ut vulgo dialectici docent. Nego, inquam, et pernego enthymema enunciatione una et conclusione constare, quamvis ita in scholis omnibus finiatur, et a nobis ipsis finitum sit aliquando, nolentibus extra locum lites suscipere." *I deny*, says he, *that the enthymeme properly understood is a truncated syllogism, as commonly is taught by dialecticians. I deny, let me repeat, peremptorily and furiously I deny, that the enthymeme consists of one premiss and the conclusion: although that doctrine has been laid down universally in the schools, and upon one occasion even by myself, as unwilling to move the question prematurely or out of its natural place.*

Facciolati is not the least accurate of logicians because he may chance to be the most elegant. Yet, we apprehend, that at such innovations Smiglecius will stir in his grave, Keckermannus will groan, "Dutch [3] Burgersdyk" will snort,

[1] This "learned Scottish friend" was the late Sir William Hamilton. It was in the summer before Waterloo, viz. in the summer of 1814, that I first became acquainted with him—in fact forty-five years ago on this 20th day of March 1859, from which I date my hurried revision of this paper entitled *Rhetoric*. [See *ante*, Vol. V, pp. 338-340.—M.]

[2] It stands at p. 227 of *Jacobi Facciolati Orationes XII, Aeroases, &c. Patavii*, 1729.—This is the second Italian edition, and was printed at the University Press. [See *ante*, Vol. V, p. 340.—M.]

[3] "*Dutch Burgersdyk*":—Pope in the *Dunciad*. The other names,

and English Crackenthorpius (who has the honour to be an ancestor of Mr. Wordsworth), though buried for two centuries, will revisit the glimpses of the moon. And really, if the question were for a name, Heaven forbid that we should disturb the peace of logicians: they might have leave to say, as of the Strid in Wharfdale,

> "It has borne that name a thousand years,
> And shall a thousand more."

But, whilst the name is abused, the idea perishes. Facciolati undoubtedly is right: nor is he the first who has observed the error. Julius Pacius, who understood Aristotle better than any man that ever lived, had long before remarked it.[1] The arguments of Facciolati we will give below[2]; it may be

if qualified apparently to frighten a horse, are all real names of men who did business in logic some 250 and 200 years ago, and were really no pretenders, though unhappily both grim and grimy in the impertinent estimates of contemporary women. [Martin Smigletius, Polish theologian and logician, 1562-1618; Bartholomew Keckermann, German writer, 1573-1609; Francis Burgersdyk (Burgersdicius), Dutch logician, 1590-1629; Richard Crakanthorpe, English controversialist, 1567-1624.—M.]

[1] Giulio Pacio, Venetian scholar, jurist, editor of Aristotle, &c., 1550-1635.—M.

[2] Upon an innovation of such magnitude, and which will be so startling to scholars, it is but fair that Facciolati should have the benefit of all his own arguments: and we have therefore resolved to condense them. 1. He begins with that very passage (or one of them) on which the received idea of the Enthymeme most relies; and from this he derives an argument for the new idea. The passage is to this effect, that the enthymeme is composed ἐκ πολλακις ἐλαττονων ἢ ἐξ ὧν ὁ συλλογισμος — *i.e. frequently* consists of fewer parts than the syllogism. *Frequently!* What logic is there in *that*? Can it be imagined that so rigorous a logician as Aristotle would notice, as a circumstance of frequent occurrence in an enthymeme, what, by the received doctrine, should be its mere essence and differential principle? To say that this happens frequently is to say, by implication, that sometimes it does *not* happen—*i.e.* that it is an accident, and no part of the definition, since it may thus confessedly be absent, *salva ratione conceptus.* 2. Waiving this argument, and supposing the suppression of one proposition to be even universal in the enthymeme, still it would be an impertinent circumstance, and (philosophically speaking) an accident. Could it be tolerated that a great systematic distinction (for such it is in Aristotle) should rest upon a mere abbreviation of convenience, "quasi vero argumentandi ratio et natura varietur cum brevius effertur," whereas Aristotle himself tells us, that "οὐ προς τον

sufficient here to state the result. An enthymeme differs from a syllogism, not in the accident of suppressing one of its propositions; either may do this, or neither; the difference is essential, and in the nature of the *matter*: that of the syllogism proper being certain and apodeictic; that of the enthymeme simply probable, and drawn from the province of opinion.

This theory tallies exactly with our own previous construction of Aristotle's Rhetoric, and explains the stress which he had laid at the outset upon enthymemes. Whatsoever is certain, or matter of fixed science, can be no subject

ἐξω λογον ἡ ἀποδειξις, ἀλλα προς τον ἐν τῃ ψυχῃ"? 3. From a particular passage in the 2d book of the Prior Analytics (chap. 27), generally interpreted in a way to favour the existing account of the enthymeme, after first of all showing that under a more accurate construction it is incompatible with that account, whilst it is in perfect harmony with the new one, Facciolati deduces an explanation of that accidental peculiarity in the enthymeme which has attracted such undue attention as to eclipse its true characteristic: the peculiarity, we mean, of being entitled (though not, as the common idea is, required) to suppress one proposition. So much we shall here anticipate as to say that this privilege arises out of the peculiar *matter* of the enthymeme, which fitted it for the purposes of the rhetorician; and these purposes, being loose and popular, brought with them proportionable indulgences; whereas the syllogism, technically so called, employing a severer matter, belonged peculiarly to the dialectician, or philosophic disputant, whose purposes, being rigorous and scientific, imposed much closer restrictions; and one of these was that he should in no case suppress any proposition, however obvious, but should formally enunciate all: just as in the debating schools of later ages it has always been the rule that, before urging his objection, the opponent should repeat the respondent's syllogism. Hence, although the rhetorician naturally used his privilege, and enthymemes were in fact generally shorn of one proposition (and *vice versa* with respect to syllogisms in the strict philosophic sense), yet was all this a mere effect of usage and accident; and it was very possible for an enthymeme to have its full complement of parts, whilst a syllogism might be defective in the very way which is falsely supposed to be of the essence of an enthymeme. 4. He derives an argument from an inconsistency with which Aristotle has been thought chargeable under the old idea of the enthymeme, and with which Gassendi has in fact charged him.[1] 5. He meets and

[1] However, as in reality the whole case was one of mere misapprehension on the part of Gassendi, and has, in fact, nothing at all to do with the nature of the enthymeme, well or ill understood, Facciolati takes nothing by this particular argument; which, however, we have retained, to make our analysis complete.

for the rhetorician: where it is possible for the understanding to be convinced, no field is open for rhetorical persuasion. Absolute certainty and fixed science transcend opinion, and exclude the probable. The province of Rhetoric, whether meant for an influence upon the actions, or simply upon the belief, lies amongst that vast field of cases where there is a *pro* and a *con*, with the chance of right and wrong, true and false, distributed in varying proportions between them. There is also an immense range of truths where there are no chances at all concerned, but the affirmative and the negative are both true: as, for example, the goodness of human nature and its wickedness; the happiness of human life and its misery; the charms of knowledge, and its hollowness; the fragility of human prosperity in the eye of religious meditation, and its security as estimated by worldly confidence and youthful hope. In all such cases the rhetorician exhibits his art by giving an impulse to one side, and by withdrawing the mind so steadily from all thoughts or images which support the other as to leave it practically under the possession of a one-sided estimate.

rebuts the force of a principal argument in favour of the enthymeme as commonly understood, viz. that in a particular part of the Prior Analytics the enthymeme is called συλλογισμος ἀτελης, an *imperfect* syllogism, — which word the commentators generally expound by "*mutilus atque imminutus.*" Here he uses the assistance of the excellent J. Pace, whom he justly describes as "virum Græcarum litterarum peritissimum, philosophum in primis bonum, et Aristotelis interpretum, quot sunt, quotque fuerunt, quotque futuri sunt, longe præstantissimum." This admirable commentator, so indispensable to all who would study the *Organon* and the Περι Ψυχης, had himself originally started that hypothesis which we are now reporting as long afterwards adopted and improved by Facciolati. Considering the unrivalled qualifications of Pace, this of itself is a great argument on our side. The objection before us, from the word ἀτελης, Pace disposes of briefly and conclusively. *First*, he says that the word is wanting in four MSS.; and he has no doubt himself "quin ex glossemate irrepserit in contextum." *Secondly*, the Latin translators and schoolmen, as Agricola and many others, take no notice of this word in their versions and commentaries. *Thirdly*, the Greek commentators, such as Joannes Grammaticus and Alexander Aphrodisiensis, clearly had no knowledge of any such use of the word *enthymeme* as that which has prevailed in later times; which is plain from this,—that, wherever they have occasion to speak of a syllogism wanting one of its members, they do not in any instance call it an enthymeme, but a συλλογισμον μονολημματον.

Upon this theory, what relation to Rhetoric shall we assign to style and the ornamental arts of composition? In some respects they seem liable to the same objection as that which Aristotle has urged against appeals to the passions.[1] Both are extra-essential, or ἐξω του πραγματος; they are subjective arts, not objective; that is, they do not affect the thing which is to be surveyed, but the eye of him who is to survey. Yet, at a banquet, the epicure holds himself not more obliged to the cook for the venison than to the physician who braces his stomach to enjoy. And any arts which conciliate regard to the speaker indirectly promote the effect of his arguments. On this account, and because (under the severest limitation of Rhetoric) they are in many cases indispensable to the perfect interpretation of the thoughts, we may admit arts of style and ornamental composition as the ministerial part of Rhetoric. But with regard to the passions, as contended for by Dr. Campbell, it is a sufficient answer that they are already preoccupied by what is called *Eloquence.*

Coleridge, as we have often heard, is in the habit of drawing the line with much philosophical beauty between Rhetoric and Eloquence. On this topic we were never so fortunate as to hear him: but, if we are here called upon for a distinction, we shall satisfy our immediate purpose by a very plain and brief one. By Eloquence we understand the overflow of powerful feelings upon occasions fitted to excite them. But Rhetoric is the art of aggrandizing and bringing out into strong relief, by means of various and striking thoughts, some aspect of truth which of itself is supported by no spontaneous feelings, and therefore rests upon artificial aids.[2]

Greece, as may well be imagined, was the birthplace of Rhetoric: to which of the Fine Arts was it not? and here, in one sense of the word Rhetoric, the art had its consum-

[1] See footnote, *ante*, p. 87.—M.

[2] Is this to be taken as De Quincey's own special conception of Rhetoric? If so, it may be translated as meaning the art of intellectual and fantastic play with any subject to its utmost capabilities, or the art of enriching any main truth or idea by inweaving with it the largest possible amount of subsidiary and illustrative thought and fancy. I do not think that he keeps very strictly to this conception

mation : for the theory, or *ars docens*, was taught with a fulness and an accuracy by the Grecian masters not afterwards approached. In particular, it was so taught by Aristotle : whose system we are disposed to agree with Dr. Whately in pronouncing the best as regards the primary purpose of a teacher ; though otherwise, for elegance and as a practical model in the art he was expounding, neither Aristotle, nor any less austere among the Greek rhetoricians, has any pretensions to measure himself with Quintilian. In reality, for a triumph over the difficulties of the subject, and as a lesson on the possibility of imparting grace to the treatment of scholastic topics naturally as intractable as that of Grammar or Prosody there is no such *chef-d'œuvre* to this hour in any literature as the Institutions of Quintilian.[1] Laying this one case out of the comparison, however, the Greek superiority was indisputable.

Yet how is it to be explained that, with these advantages on the side of the Greek Rhetoric as an *ars docens*, Rhetoric as a practical art (the *ars utens*) never made any advances amongst the Greeks to the brilliancy which it attained in Rome ? Up to a certain period, and throughout the palmy state of the Greek republics, we may account for it thus :— Rhetoric, in its finest and most absolute burnish, may be called an *eloquentia umbratica* ; that is, it aims at an elaborate form of beauty which shrinks from the strife of business, and could neither arise nor make itself felt in a tumultuous assembly. Certain features, it is well known, and peculiar styles of countenance, which are impressive in a drawing-room become ineffective on a public stage. The fine tooling and delicate tracery of the cabinet artist is lost upon a building of colossal proportions. Extemporaneousness, again,—a favourable circumstance to impassioned eloquence,—is death to Rhetoric. Two characteristics indeed there were of a Greek popular assembly which must have operated fatally on the

of Rhetoric,—which does not accord perfectly with any of the traditional definitions already mentioned, *ante*, p. 85, footnote ; but it does accompany him through a good deal of what follows, and regulates to some extent his selection of authors to represent the rhetorical style. —M.

[1] Quintilian, A.D. 42-118, author of *Institutiones Oratoriæ* or *Institutes of Oratory*.—M.

rhetorician: its fervour, in the first place; and, secondly, the coarseness of a real interest. All great rhetoricians in selecting their subject have shunned the determinate cases of real life: and even in the single instance of a deviation from the rule—that of the author (whoever he be) of the Declamations attributed to Quintilian—the cases are shaped with so romantic a generality, and so slightly circumstantiated, as to allow him all the benefit of pure abstractions.

We can readily understand, therefore, why the fervid oratory of the Athenian assemblies, and the intense reality of its interest, should stifle the growth of rhetoric: the smoke, tarnish, and demoniac glare of Vesuvius easily eclipse the pallid coruscations of the aurora borealis. And, in fact, amongst the greater orators of Greece there is not a solitary gleam of rhetoric. Isocrates may have a little, being (to say the truth) neither orator nor rhetorician in any eminent sense; Demosthenes has none. But, when those great thunders had subsided which reached "to Macedon and Artaxerxes' throne," when the "fierce democracy" itself had perished, and Greece had fallen under the common circumstances of the Roman Empire, how came it that Greek Rhetoric did not blossom concurrently with Roman? Vegetate it did; and a rank crop of weeds grew up under the name of Rhetoric, down to the times of the Emperor Julian and his friend Libanius (both of whom, by the way, were as worthless writers as have ever abused the Greek language).[1] But this part of Greek Literature is a desert with no oasis. The fact is, if it were required to assign the two bodies of writers who have exhibited the human understanding in the most abject poverty, and whose works by no possibility emit a casual scintillation of wit, fancy, just thinking, or good writing, we should certainly fix upon Greek rhetoricians and Italian critics. Amongst the whole mass there is not a page that any judicious friend to literature would wish to reprieve from destruction. And in both cases we apprehend that the possibility of so much inanity is due in part to the quality of the two languages. The diffuseness and loose structure of Greek style unfit it for the closeness, condensa-

[1] The Emperor Julian, A.D. 331-363; Libanius, Greek rhetorician, A.D. 314-391.—M.

tion, and το ἀγχιστροφον of rhetoric ; the melodious beauty of the mere sounds, which both in the Italian and in the Greek are combined with much majesty, dwells upon the ear so delightfully that in no other language is it so easy as in these two to write with little or no meaning, and to flow along through a whole wilderness of inanity without particularly rousing the reader's disgust.

In the literature of Rome it is that we find the true El Dorado of rhetoric, as we might expect from the sinewy compactness of the language. Livy, and, above all preceding writers, Ovid, display the greatest powers of rhetoric in forms of composition which were not particularly adapted to favour that talent. The contest of Ajax and Ulysses for the arms of Achilles in one of the latter books of the *Metamorphoses* is a *chef-d'œuvre* of rhetoric, considering its metrical form ; for metre, and especially the flowing heroic hexameter, is no advantage to the rhetorician.[1] The two Plinys, Lucan (though again under the disadvantage of verse), Petronius Arbiter, and Quintilian, but above all the Senecas[2] (for a Spanish cross appears to improve the quality of the rhetorician), have left a body of rhetorical composition such as no modern nation has rivalled. Even the most brilliant of these writers, however, were occasionally surpassed in particular *bravuras* of rhetoric by several of the Latin Fathers, particularly Tertullian, Arnobius, St Austin,[3] and a writer whose name we cannot at this moment recall. In fact, a little African blood operated as genially in this respect as Spanish, whilst an Asiatic cross was inevitably fatal, by prompting a diffusion and inflation of style radically hostile

[1] This, added to the style and quality of his poems, makes it the more remarkable that Virgil should have been deemed a rhetorician. Yet so it was. Walsh notices, in the Life of Virgil which he furnished for his friend Dryden's Translation, that "his (Virgil's) rhetoric was in such general esteem that lectures were read upon it in the reign of Tiberius, and the subject of declamations taken out of him."

[2] Pliny the elder, A.D. 23-79 ; Pliny the younger, A.D. 61-106 ; Lucan, A.D. 39-65 ; Petronius Arbiter, died A.D. 66 ; Quintilian, A.D. 42-118 ; Seneca the elder, died about A.D. 32 ; Seneca the younger, died A.D. 65.—M.

[3] Tertullian died *circa* A.D. 240 ; Arnobius lived about A.D. 290 ; St. Augustine, A.D. 354-430.—M.

to the condensation of keen, arrowy rhetoric. Partly from this cause, and partly because they wrote in an unfavourable language, the Greek Fathers are, one and all, Birmingham rhetoricians. Even Gregory Nazianzen is so, with submission to Messieurs of the Port Royal and other bigoted critics who have pronounced him at the very top of the tree among the fine writers of antiquity.[1] Undoubtedly he has a turgid style of mouthy grandiloquence (though often the merest bombast); but for polished rhetoric he is singularly unfitted, by inflated habits of thinking, by loitering diffuseness, and a dreadful trick of calling names. The spirit of personal invective is peculiarly adverse to the coolness of rhetoric. As to Chrysostom and Basil, with less of pomp and swagger than Gregory, they have not at all more of rhetorical burnish and compression.[2] Upon the whole, looking back through the dazzling files of the ancient rhetoricians, we are disposed to rank the Senecas and Tertullian as the leaders of the band; for St. Austin, in his Confessions, and wherever he becomes peculiarly interesting, is apt to be impassioned and fervent in a degree which makes him break out of the proper pace of rhetoric. He is matched to trot, and is continually breaking into a gallop. Indeed, his Confessions have in parts,—particularly in those which relate to the death of his young friend and his own frenzy of grief,—all that real passion which is only imagined in the Confessions of Rousseau under a preconception derived from his known character and unhappy life. By the time of the Emperor Justinian (say A.D. 530), or in the interval between that time and the era of Mahomet (A.D. 620),—which interval we regard as the common *crepusculum* between Ancient and Modern History, all Rhetoric (as the professional pretension of a class) seems to have finally expired.

In the Literature of Modern Europe Rhetoric has been cultivated with success. But this remark applies only with any force to a period which is now long past; and it is probable, upon various considerations, that such another

[1] Gregory Nazianzen, bishop of Constantinople about A D. 380. —M.

[2] John Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople from 397 to 407; St. Basil, bishop of Cæsarea from 371 to 380.—M.

period will never revolve. The rhetorician's art in its glory and power has silently faded away before the stern tendencies of the age; and, if, by any peculiarity of taste or strong determination of the intellect, a rhetorician *en grande costume* were again to appear amongst us, it is certain that he would have no better welcome than a stare of surprise as a posture-maker or balancer, not more elevated in the general estimate, but far less amusing, than the acrobat, or funambulist, or equestrian gymnast. No; the age of Rhetoric, like that of Chivalry, has passed amongst forgotten things; and the rhetorician can have no more chance for returning than the rhapsodist of early Greece or the troubadour of romance. So multiplied are the modes of intellectual enjoyment in modern times that the choice is absolutely distracted; and in a boundless theatre of pleasures, to be had at little or no cost of intellectual activity, it would be marvellous indeed if any considerable audience could be found for an exhibition which presupposes a state of tense exertion on the part both of auditor and performer. To hang upon one's own thoughts as an object of conscious interest, to play with them, to watch and pursue them through a maze of inversions, evolutions, and harlequin changes, implies a condition of society either, like that in the monastic ages, forced to introvert its energies from mere defect of books (whence arose the scholastic metaphysics, admirable for its subtlety, but famishing the mind whilst it sharpened its edge in one exclusive direction); or, if it implies no absolute starvation of intellect, as in the case of the Roman rhetoric, which arose upon a considerable (though not very various) literature, it proclaims at least a quiescent state of the public mind, unoccupied with daily novelties, and at leisure from the agitations of eternal change.

Growing out of the same condition of society, there is another cause at work which will for ever prevent the resurrection of rhetoric: viz. the necessities of public business, its vast extent, complexity, fulness of details, and consequent vulgarity, as compared with that of the ancients. The very same cause, by the way, furnishes an answer to the question moved by Hume, in one of his essays, with regard to the declension of eloquence in our deliberative assemblies. Eloquence, or at least that which is senatorial and forensic,

has languished under the same changes of society which have proved fatal to Rhetoric. The political economy of the ancient republics, and their commerce, were simple and unelaborate ; the system of their public services, both martial and civil, was arranged on the most naked and manageable principles ; for we must not confound the perplexity in our modern explanations of these things with a perplexity in the things themselves. The foundation of these differences was in the differences of domestic life. Personal wants being few, both from climate and from habit, and, in the great majority of the citizens, limited almost to the pure necessities of nature,—hence arose, for the mass of the population, the possibility of surrendering themselves, much more than with us, either to the one paramount business of the state, war, or to a state of Indian idleness. Rome, in particular, during the ages of her growing luxury, must be regarded as a nation supported by other nations ; by largesses, in effect ; that is to say, by the plunder of conquest. Living, therefore, upon foreign alms, or upon corn purchased by the product of tribute or of spoils, a nation could readily dispense with that expansive development of her internal resources upon which Modern Europe has been forced by the more equal distribution of power amongst the civilized world.

The changes which have followed in the functions of our popular assemblies correspond to the great revolution here described. Suppose yourself an ancient Athenian at some customary display of Athenian oratory, what will be the topics ? Peace or war, vengeance for public wrongs, or mercy to prostrate submission, national honour and national gratitude, glory and shame, and every aspect of open appeal to the primal sensibilities of man. On the other hand, enter an English Parliament, having the most of a popular character in its constitution and practice that is anywhere to be found in the Christendom of this day, and the subject of debate will probably be a road bill, a bill for enabling a coal-gas company to assume certain privileges against a competitor in oil-gas,[1] a bill for disfranchising a corrupt borough, or perhaps some technical point of form in the Exchequer Bills bill. So much is the face of public business vulgarized by details.

[1] Written thirty years ago [*i.e.* in 1828.—M.]

The same spirit of differences extends to forensic eloquence. Grecian and Roman pleadings are occupied with questions of elementary justice, large and diffusive, apprehensible even to the uninstructed, and connecting themselves at every step with powerful and tempestuous feelings.[1] In British trials, on the contrary, the field is foreclosed against any interest of so elevating a nature, because the rights and wrongs of the case are almost inevitably absorbed to an unlearned eye by the technicalities of the law, or by the intricacy of the facts.

But this is not always the case! Doubtless not: subjects for eloquence, and therefore eloquence, will sometimes arise in our senate and our courts of justice. And in one respect our British displays are more advantageously circumstanced than the ancient, being more conspicuously brought forward into effect by their contrast to the ordinary course of business.

> "Therefore are feasts so solemn and so rare,
> Since, seldom coming, in the long year set,
> Like stones of worth they thinly placèd are,
> Or captain jewels in the carcanet." [2]

But still the objection of Hume remains unimpeached as to the fact that eloquence is a rarer growth of modern than of ancient civil polity, even in those countries which have the advantage of free institutions. Now, why is this? The letter of this objection is sustained, but substantially it is disarmed, so far as its purpose was to argue any declension on the part of Christian nations, by this explanation of ours, which traces the impoverished condition of civil eloquence to the complexity of public business.

But eloquence in one form or other is immortal, and will never perish so long as there are human hearts moving under the agitations of hope and fear, love and passionate hatred. And, in particular to us of the modern world, as an endless source of indemnification for what we have lost in the simplicity of our social systems, we have received a new dowry of eloquence, and *that* of the highest order, in the sanctities of our religion: a field unknown to antiquity, for

[1] There were speeches of Demosthenes and others on intricate civil cases of debt, &c.—M.

[2] Shakspere, *Sonnet* 52.

the pagan religions did not produce much poetry, and of oratory none at all.

On the other hand, that cause which, operating upon eloquence, has but extinguished it under a single direction, to rhetoric has been unconditionally fatal. Eloquence is not banished from the public business of this country as useless, but as difficult, and as not spontaneously arising from topics such as generally furnish the staple of debate. But rhetoric, if attempted on a formal scale, would be summarily exploded as pure foppery and trifling with time. Falstaff on the field of battle presenting his bottle of sack for a pistol, or Polonius with his quibbles, could not appear a more unseasonable *plaisanteur* than a rhetorician alighting from the clouds upon a public assembly in Great Britain met for the despatch of business.

Under these malign aspects of the modern structure of society, a structure to which the whole world will be moulded as it becomes civilized, there can be no room for any revival of rhetoric in public speaking, and, from the same and other causes, acting upon the standard of public taste, quite as little room in written composition. In spite, however, of the tendencies to this consummation, which have been long ripening, it is a fact that, next after Rome, England is the country in which rhetoric prospered most at a time when science was unborn as a popular interest, and the commercial activities of aftertimes were yet sleeping in their rudiments. This was in the period from the latter end of the sixteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century; and, though the English Rhetoric was less rigorously true to its own ideal than the Roman, and often modulated into a higher key of impassioned eloquence, yet unquestionably in some of its qualities it remains a monument of the very finest rhetorical powers.

Omitting Sir Philip Sidney, and omitting his friend, Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke (in whose prose there are some bursts of pathetic eloquence, as there is of rhetoric in his verse, though too often harsh and cloudy), the first very eminent rhetorician in the English Literature is Donne.[1]

[1] Sir Philip Sidney, 1554-1586; Lord Brooke, 1554-1628; Dr. John Donne, 1573-1631.—M.

Dr. Johnson inconsiderately classes him in company with Cowley, &c., under the title of *Metaphysical* Poets[1]: metaphysical they were not; *Rhetorical* would have been a more accurate designation. In saying *that*, however, we must remind our readers that we revert to the original use of the word *Rhetoric*, as laying the principal stress upon the management of the thoughts, and only a secondary one upon the ornaments of style. Few writers have shown a more extraordinary compass of powers than Donne; for he combined—what no other man has ever done—the last sublimation of dialectical subtlety and address with the most impassioned majesty. Massy diamonds compose the very substance of his poem on the Metempsychosis, thoughts and descriptions which have the fervent and gloomy sublimity of Ezekiel or Æschylus, whilst a diamond dust of rhetorical brilliancies is strewed over the whole of his occasional verses and his prose. No criticism was ever more unhappy than that of Dr. Johnson's which denounces all this artificial display as so much perversion of taste. There cannot be a falser thought than this; for upon that principle a whole class of compositions might be vicious by conforming to its own ideal. The artifice and machinery of rhetoric furnishes in its degree as legitimate a basis for intellectual pleasure as any other; that the pleasure is of an inferior order, can no more attaint the idea or model of the composition than it can impeach the excellence of an epigram that it is not a tragedy. Every species of composition is to be tried by its own laws; and, if Dr. Johnson had urged explicitly (what was evidently moving in his thoughts) that a metrical structure, by holding forth the promise of poetry, defrauds the mind of its just expectations, he would have said what is notoriously false. Metre is open to any form of composition, provided it will aid the expression of the thoughts; and the only sound objection to it is that it has *not* done so. Weak criticism, indeed, is that which condemns a copy of verses under the ideal of poetry, when the mere substitution of another name and classification suffices to evade the sentence, and to reinstate the composition in its rights as rhetoric. It

[1] Abraham Cowley, 1618-1667: Johnson's dissertation on the "Metaphysical Poets" occurs in his Life of Cowley.—M.

may be very true that the age of Donne gave too much encouragement to his particular vein of composition. That, however, argues no depravity of taste, but a taste erring only in being too limited and exclusive.

The next writers of distinction who came forward as rhetoricians were Burton in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*[1] and Milton in many of his prose works. They labour under opposite defects. Burton is too quaint, fantastic, and disjointed; Milton too slow, solemn, and continuous. In the one we see the flutter of a parachute; in the other the stately and voluminous gyrations of an ascending balloon. Agile movement, and a certain degree of fancifulness, are indispensable to rhetoric. But Burton is not so much fanciful as capricious; his motion is not the motion of freedom, but of lawlessness; he does not dance, but caper. Milton, on the other hand, *polonaises* with a grand Castilian air, in paces too sequacious and processional; even in his passages of merriment, and when stung into a quicker motion by personal disdain for an unworthy antagonist, his thoughts and his imagery still appear to move to the music of the organ.

In some measure it is a consequence of these peculiarities, and so far it is the more a duty to allow for them, that the rhetoric of Milton, though wanting in animation, is unusually superb in its colouring; its very monotony is derived from the sublime unity of the presiding impulse; and hence it sometimes ascends into eloquence of the highest kind, and sometimes even into the raptures of lyric poetry. The main thing, indeed, wanting to Milton was to have fallen upon happier subjects: for, with the exception of the "Areopagitica," there is not one of his prose works upon a theme of universal interest, or perhaps fitted to be the ground-work of a rhetorical display.

But, as it has happened to Milton sometimes to give us poetry for rhetoric, in one instance he has unfortunately given us rhetoric for poetry. This occurs in the *Paradise Lost*, where the debates of the fallen angels are carried on by a degrading process of gladiatorial rhetoric. Nay, even the counsels of God, though not debated to and fro, are, however,

[1] Robert Burton, 1576-1640. His *Anatomy of Melancholy* was first published in 1621.—M.

expounded rhetorically. This is astonishing; for no one was better aware than Milton[1] of the distinction between the *discursive* and *intuitive* acts of the mind as apprehended by the old metaphysicians, and the incompatibility of the former with any but a limitary intellect. This indeed was familiar to all the writers of his day; but, as Mr. Gifford has shown, by a most idle note upon a passage in Massinger,[2] that it is a distinction which has now perished (except indeed in Germany), we shall recall it to the reader's attention. An *intuition* is any knowledge whatsoever, sensuous or intellectual, which is apprehended *immediately*: a notion, on the other hand, or product of the discursive faculty, is any knowledge whatsoever which is apprehended *mediately*. All reasoning is carried on discursively; that is, *discurrendo*,—by running about to the right and the left, laying the separate notices together, and thence mediately deriving some third apprehension. Now, this process, however grand a characteristic of the human species as distinguished from the brute, is degrading to any supra-human intelligence, divine or angelic, by arguing limitation. God must not proceed by steps and the fragmentary knowledge of accretion; in which case at starting he has all the intermediate notices as so many bars between himself and the conclusion, and even at the penultimate or antepenultimate act he is still short of the truth. God must *see*; he must *intuit*, so to speak; and all truth must reach him simultaneously, first and last, without succession of time or partition of acts: just as light, before that theory had been refuted by the Satellites of Jupiter, was held not to be propagated in time, but to be here and there at one and the same indivisible instant. Paley, from mere rudeness of metaphysical skill, has talked of the *judgment* and the *judiciousness* of God: but this is profaneness, and a language unworthily applied even to an angelic being. To judge, that is to subsume one proposition under another,—to be judicious, that is, to collate the means with the end,—are acts impossible in the Divine nature, and not to be ascribed, even under the licence of a figure, to any being

[1] See the Fifth Book of the *Paradise Lost*, and passages in his prose writings.

[2] Gifford's edition of Massinger, published 1813.—M.

which transcends the limitations of humanity. Many other instances there are in which Milton is taxed with having too grossly sensualized his supernatural agents; some of which, however, the necessities of the action may excuse; and at the worst they are readily submitted to as having an intelligible purpose—that of bringing so mysterious a thing as a spiritual nature or agency within the limits of the representable. But the intellectual degradation fixed on his spiritual beings by the rhetorical debates is purely gratuitous, neither resulting from the course of the action nor at all promoting it. Making allowances, however, for the original error in the conception, it must be granted that the execution is in the best style. The mere logic of the debate, indeed, is not better managed than it would have been by the House of Commons. But the colours of style are grave and suitable to afflicted angels. In the *Paradise Regained* this is still more conspicuously true: the oratory there, on the part of Satan in the Wilderness, is no longer of a rhetorical cast, but in the grandest style of impassioned eloquence that can be imagined as the fit expression for the movements of an angelic despair; and in particular the speech, on being first challenged by our Saviour, beginning

"'Tis true, I *am* that spirit unfortunate"

is not excelled in sublimity by any passage in the poem.

Milton, however, was not destined to gather the *spolia opima* of English rhetoric. Two contemporaries of his own, and whose literary course pretty nearly coincided with his own in point of time, surmounted all competition, and in that amphitheatre became the Protagonistæ. These were Jeremy Taylor and Sir Thomas Browne; who, if not absolutely the foremost in the accomplishments of art, were undoubtedly the richest, the most dazzling, and, with reference to their matter, the most captivating, of all rhetoricians.[1] In them first, and perhaps (if we except occasional passages in the German John Paul Richter) in them only, are the two opposite forces of eloquent passion and rhetorical fancy brought into an exquisite equilibrium,—approaching, receding,

[1] Jeremy Taylor, 1613-1667; Sir Thomas Browne of Norwich, 1605-1682.—M.

—attracting, repelling,—blending, separating,—chasing and chased, as in a fugue,—and again lost in a delightful interfusion, so as to create a middle species of composition, more various and stimulating to the understanding than pure eloquence, more gratifying to the affections than naked rhetoric. Under this one circumstance of coincidence, in other respects their minds were of the most opposite temperament: Sir Thomas Browne, deep, tranquil, and majestic as Milton, silently premeditating and "disclosing his golden couplets," as under some genial instinct of incubation; Jeremy Taylor, restless, fervid, aspiring, scattering abroad a prodigality of life, not unfolding but creating, with the energy and the "myriad-mindedness" of Shakspere. Where but in Sir T. B. shall one hope to find music so Miltonic, an intonation of such solemn chords as are struck in the following opening bar of a passage in the *Urn-Burial*—"Now, since these bones have rested quietly in the grave under the drums and tramplings of three conquests," &c.[1] What a melodious ascent as of a prelude to some impassioned requiem breathing from the pomps of earth, and from the sanctities of the grave! What a *fluctus decumanus* of rhetoric! Time expounded, not by generations or centuries, but by the vast periods of conquests and dynasties; by cycles of Pharaohs and Ptolemies, Antiochi and Arsacides! And these vast successions of time distinguished and figured by the uproars which revolve at their inaugurations; by the drums and tramplings rolling overhead upon the chambers of forgotten dead—the trepidations of time and mortality vexing, at secular intervals, the everlasting sabbaths of the grave! Show us, O pedant, such another strain from the oratory of Greece or Rome! For it is not an Οὐ μα τους ἐν Μαραθωνι τεθνηκοτας,[2] or any such bravura, that will make a fit

[1] Browne's *Urn-Burial* was published originally in 1658; and the splendid passage in it to which De Quincey refers is the whole of the concluding chapter. His quotation of the opening words is not quite accurate. The real words are:—"Now, since these dead bones have already outlasted the living ones of Methuselah, and in a yard underground, and thin walls of clay, outworn all the strong and spacious buildings above it, and quietly rested under the drums and tramplings of three conquests."—M.

[2] A famous passage in Demosthenes's great speech "Concerning the

antiphony to this sublime rapture. We will not, however, attempt a descant upon the merits of Sir T. Browne after the admirable one by Coleridge: and, as to Jeremy Taylor, we would as readily undertake to put a belt about the ocean as to characterize him adequately within the space at our command. It will please the reader better that he should characterize himself, however imperfectly, by a few specimens selected from some of his rarest works: a method which will, at the same time, have the collateral advantage of illustrating an important truth in reference to this florid or Corinthian order of rhetoric which we shall have occasion to notice a little further on:—

"It was observed by a Spanish confessor that, in persons not very religious, the confessions which they made upon their deathbeds were the coldest, the most imperfect, and with less contrition than all which he had observed them to make in many years before. For, as the canes of Egypt, when they newly arise from their bed of mud and slime of Nilus, start up into an equal and continual length, and uninterrupted but with few knots, and are strong and beauteous, with great distances and intervals, but, when they are grown to their full length, they lessen into the point of a pyramid, and multiply their knots and joints, interrupting the fineness and smoothness of its body: so are the steps and declensions of him that does not grow in grace. At first, when he springs up from his impurity by the waters of baptism and repentance, he grows straight and strong, and suffers but few interruptions of piety; and his constant courses of religion are but rarely intermitted, till they ascend up to a full age, or towards the ends of their life; then they are weak, and their devotions often intermitted, and their breaks are frequent, and they seek excuses, and labour for dispensations, and love God and religion less and less, till their old age, instead of a crown of their virtue and perseverance, ends in levity and unprofitable courses, light and useless as the tufted feathers upon the cane: every wind can play with it and abuse it, but no man can make it useful."

"If we consider the price that the Son of God paid for the redemption of a soul, we shall better estimate of it than from the weak discourses of our imperfect and unlearned philosophy. Not the spoil of rich provinces—not the estimate of kingdoms—not the price of Cleopatra's draught—not anything that was corruptible or perishing; for that which could not one minute retard the term of its own natural dissolution could not be a price for the redemption of one perishing soul. When God *made* a soul, it was only *faciamus hominem ad*

Crown," in which he invokes the memories of the illustrious dead at Marathon, Salamis, &c.—M.

imaginem nostram; he spake the word, and it was done. But, when man had lost his soul, which the spirit of God had breathed into him, it was not so soon *recovered*. It is like the Resurrection, which hath troubled the faith of many, who are more apt to believe that God made a man from nothing than that he can return a man from dust and corruption. But for this resurrection of the soul, for the re-implacing of the Divine image, for the re-entitling it to the kingdoms of grace and glory, God did a greater work than the creation. He was fain to contract Divinity to a span; to send a person to die for us who of himself could not die, and was constrained to use rare and mysterious arts to make him capable of dying: He prepared a person instrumental to his purpose by sending his Son from his own bosom—a person both God and Man, an enigma to all nations and to all sciences; one that ruled over all the angels, that walked on the pavements of heaven; whose feet were clothed with stars; whose understanding is larger than that infinite space which we imagine in the uncircumscribed distance beyond the first orb of heaven; a person to whom felicity was as essential as life to God. This was the only person that was designed in the eternal decrees to pay the price of a soul; less than this person could not do it. Nothing less than an infinite excellence could satisfy for a soul lost to infinite ages, who was to bear the load of an infinite anger from the provocation of an eternal God. And yet, if it be possible that Infinite can receive degrees, this is but one-half of the abyss, and I think the lesser."

"It was a strange variety of natural efficacies that manna should corrupt in twenty-four hours if gathered upon Wednesday or Thursday, and that it should last till forty-eight hours if gathered upon the even of the Sabbath, and that it should last many hundreds of years when placed in the sanctuary by the ministry of the high priest. But so it was in the Jews' religion; and manna pleased every palate, and it filled all appetites; and the same measure was a different proportion,—it was much, and it was little; as if nature, that it might serve religion, had been taught some measures of infinity, which is everywhere and nowhere, filling all things, and circumscribed with nothing, measured by one omer, and doing the work of two; like the crowns of kings, fitting the brows of Nimrod and the most mighty warrior, and yet not too large for the temples of an infant prince."

"His mercies are more than we can tell, and they are more than we can feel: for all the world, in the abyss of the Divine mercies, is like a man diving into the bottom of the sea, over whose head the waters run insensibly and unperceived, and yet the weight is vast, and the sum of them immeasurable: and the man is not pressed with the burden, nor confounded with numbers: and no observation is able to recount, no sense sufficient to perceive, no memory large enough to retain, no understanding great enough to apprehend, this infinity."

These passages are not cited with so vain a purpose as that of furnishing a sea-line for measuring the "soundless

deeps" of Jeremy Taylor, but to illustrate that one remarkable characteristic of his style which we have already noticed, viz. the everlasting strife and fluctuation between his rhetoric and his eloquence, which maintain their alternations with force and inevitable recurrence, like the systole and diastole, the contraction and expansion, of some living organ. For this characteristic he was indebted in mixed proportions to his own peculiar style of understanding and the nature of his subject. Where the understanding is not active and teeming, but possessed and filled by a few vast ideas (which was the case of Milton), there the funds of a varied rhetoric are wanting. On the other hand, where the understanding is all alive with the subtlety of distinctions, and nourished (as Jeremy Taylor's was) by casuistical divinity, the variety and opulence of the rhetoric is apt to be oppressive. But this tendency, in the case of Taylor, was happily checked and balanced by the commanding passion, intensity, and solemnity of his exalted theme, which gave a final unity to the tumultuous motions of his intellect. The only very obvious defects of Taylor were in the mechanical part of his art, in the mere *technique*. He writes like one who never revises, nor tries the effect upon his ear of his periods as musical wholes, and in the syntax and connexion of the parts seems to have been habitually careless of slight blemishes.

Jeremy Taylor[1] died in a few years after the Restoration.

[1] In retracing the history of English rhetoric, it may strike the reader that we have made some capital omissions. But in these he will find we have been governed by sufficient reasons. Shakspere is no doubt a rhetorician *majorum gentium*; but he is so much more that scarcely an instance is to be found of his rhetoric which does not pass by fits into a higher element of eloquence or poetry. The first and the last acts, for instance, of the *Two Noble Kinsmen*,—which, in point of composition, is perhaps the most superb work in the language, and beyond all doubt from the loom of Shakspere,—would have been the most gorgeous rhetoric, had they not happened to be something far better. The supplications of the widowed Queens to Theseus, the invocations of their tutelar divinities by Palamon and Arcite, the death of Arcite, &c., are finished in a more elaborate style of excellence than any other almost of Shakspere's most felicitous scenes. In their first intention they were perhaps merely rhetorical; but the furnace of composition has transmuted their substance. Indeed, specimens of mere rhetoric would be better sought in some of the other great dramatists, who are under a less fatal necessity of

Sir Thomas Browne, though at that time nearly thirty years removed from the first surreptitious edition of his *Religio Medici*, lingered a little longer. But, when both were gone, it may be truly affirmed that the great oracles of rhetoric were finally silenced. South and Barrow, indeed, were brilliant dialecticians in different styles; but, after Tillotson, with his meagre intellect, his low key of feeling, and the smug and scanty draperies of his style, had announced a new era, English divinity ceased to be the racy vineyard that it had been in the ages of ferment and struggle.[1] Like the soil of Sicily (*vide* Sir H. Davy's *Agricultural Chemistry*), it was exhausted for ever by the tilth and rank fertility of its golden youth.

Since then great passions and high thinking have either

turning everything they touch into the pure gold of poetry. Two other writers, with great original capacities for rhetoric, we have omitted in our list from separate considerations: we mean Sir Walter Raleigh and Lord Bacon. The first will hardly have been missed by the general reader; for his finest passages are dispersed through the body of his bulky history, and are touched with a sadness too pathetic, and of too personal a growth, to fulfil the conditions of a gay rhetoric as an art rejoicing in its own energies. With regard to Lord Bacon the case is different. He had great advantages for rhetoric, being figurative and sensuous (as great thinkers must always be), and having no feelings too profound, or of a nature to disturb the balance of a pleasurable activity; but yet, if we except a few letters, and parts of a few speeches, he never comes forward as a rhetorician. The reason is that, being always in quest of absolute truth, he contemplates all subjects, not through the rhetorical fancy, which is most excited by mere seeming resemblances, and such as can only sustain themselves under a single phasis, but through the philosophic fancy, or that which rests upon real analogies. Another unfavourable circumstance, arising in fact out of the plethoric fulness of Lord B.'s mind, is the short-hand style of his composition, in which the connexions are seldom fully developed. It was the lively *mot* of a great modern poet, speaking of Lord B.'s Essays, "that they are not plants, but seeds; not oaks, but acorns."

[1] Dr. Robert South, 1633-1716; Dr. Isaac Barrow, 1630-1677; Archbishop John Tillotson, 1630-1694.—As De Quincey's list of the finest representatives of English Prose Rhetoric in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries ends here, we may note with some surprise the omission of John Lyly, the author of *Euphues* (died about 1601), and Drummond of Hawthornden (1585-1649), whose prose-tract entitled *A Cypress Grove* rivals for beauty and music of style the best of Browne of Norwich.—M.

disappeared from literature altogether, or thrown themselves into poetic forms which, with the privilege of a masquerade, are allowed to assume the spirit of past ages, and to speak in a key unknown to the general literature. At all events, no pulpit oratory of a rhetorical cast for upwards of a century has been able to support itself when stripped of the aids of voice and action. Robert Hall and Edward Irving, when printed, exhibit only the spasms of weakness.[1] Nor do we remember one memorable burst of rhetoric in the pulpit eloquence of the last one hundred and fifty years, with the exception of a fine oath ejaculated by a dissenting minister of Cambridge, who, when appealing for the confirmation of his words to the grandeur of man's nature, swore,—By this and by the other, and at length, "By the Iliad, by the Odyssey," as the climax in a long bead-roll of *speciosa miracula* which he had apostrophized as monuments of human power. As to Foster, he has been prevented from preaching by a complaint affecting the throat; but, judging from the quality of his celebrated Essays, he could never have figured as a truly splendid rhetorician; for the imagery and ornamental parts of his Essays have evidently not grown up in the loom, and concurrently with the texture of the thoughts, but have been separately added afterwards, as so much embroidery or fringe.[2]

Politics, meantime, however inferior in any shape to religion as an ally of real eloquence, might yet, either when barbed by an interest of intense personality, or on the very opposite footing of an interest *not* personal but comprehensively national, have irritated the growth of rhetoric such as the spirit of the times allowed. In one conspicuous instance it did so; but generally it had little effect, as a cursory glance over the two last centuries will show.

In the reign of James I. the House of Commons first became the theatre of struggles truly national. The relations of the People and the Crown were then brought to issue, and, under shifting names, continued *sub judice* from that time to

[1] Robert Hall, Baptist preacher, 1764-1831; Edward Irving, 1792-1834. Strange that Chalmers is left unmentioned!—M.

[2] John Foster, essayist, 1770-1846; not to be confounded with John Forster, biographer of Dickens, &c.—M.

1688 ; and from that time, in fact, a corresponding interest was directed to the proceedings of Parliament. But it was not until 1642 that any free communication was made of what passed in debate. During the whole of the Civil War the speeches of the leading members upon all great questions were freely published in occasional pamphlets. Naturally they were very much compressed ; but enough survives to show that, from the agitations of the times and the religious gravity of the House, no rhetoric was sought or would have been tolerated. In the reign of Charles II, judging from such records as we have of the most critical debates (that preserved by Locke, for instance, through the assistance of his patron Lord Shaftesbury), the general tone and standard of Parliamentary eloquence had taken pretty nearly its present form and level. The religious gravity had then given way ; and the pedantic tone, stiffness, and formality of punctual divisions, had been abandoned for the freedom of polite conversation. It was not, however, until the reign of Queen Anne that the qualities and style of parliamentary eloquence were submitted to public judgment ; this was on occasion of the trial of Dr. Sacheverell,[1] which was managed by members of the House of Commons. The Whigs, however, of that era had no distinguished speakers. On the Tory side, St. John (Lord Bolingbroke) was the most accomplished person in the House. His style may be easily collected from his writings, which have all the air of having been dictated without premeditation ; and the effect of so much showy and fluent declamation, combined with the graces of his manner and person, may be inferred from the deep impression which they seem to have left upon Lord Chesterfield, himself so accomplished a judge, and so familiar with the highest efforts of the next age in Pulteney and Lord Chatham. With two exceptions, indeed, to be noticed presently, Lord Bolingbroke came the nearest of all parliamentary orators who have been particularly recorded to the

[1] Henry Sacheverell, Tory divine, tried before the House of Lords in 1710 for sermons attacking the Revolution Settlement, the Act of Toleration, &c. He was suspended from the clerical office for three years, and the sermons were ordered to be burnt by the hangman. —M.

ideal of a fine rhetorician. It was no disadvantage to him that he was shallow, being so luminous and transparent; and the splendour of his periodic diction, with his fine delivery, compensated his defect in imagery. Sir Robert Walpole was another Lord Londonderry; like him, an excellent statesman, and a first-rate leader of the House of Commons, but in other respects a plain unpretending man; and, like Lord Londonderry, he had the reputation of a blockhead with all eminent blockheads, and of a man of talents with those who were themselves truly such. "When I was very young," says Burke, "a general fashion told me I was to admire some of the writings against that minister; a little more maturity taught me as much to despise them." Lord Mansfield, "the fluent Murray," was, or would have been but for the counteraction of law, another Bolingbroke. "How sweet an Ovid was in Murray lost!" says Pope; and, if the comparison were suggested with any thoughtful propriety, it ascribes to Lord Mansfield the talents of a first-rate rhetorician. Lord Chatham had no rhetoric at all, any more than Charles Fox of the next generation: both were too fervent, too Demosthenic, and threw themselves too ardently upon the graces of nature. Mr. Pitt came nearer to the idea of a rhetorician, in so far as he seemed to have more artifice; but this was only in the sonorous rotundity of his periods, which were cast in a monotonous mould,—for in other respects he would have been keenly alive to the ridicule of rhetoric in a First Lord of the Treasury.

All these persons, whatever might be their other differences, agreed in this,—that they were no jugglers, but really *were* that which they appeared to be, and never struggled for distinctions which did not naturally belong to them. But next upon the roll comes forward an absolute *charlatan*: a *charlatan* the most accomplished that can ever have figured upon so intellectual a stage. This was Sheridan, a mocking-bird through the entire scale, from the highest to the lowest note of the gamut; in fact, to borrow a coarse word, the mere impersonation of humbug. Even as a wit, he has been long known to be a wholesale plagiarist; and the exposures of his kind biographer, Mr. Moore,[1] exhibit him in that line

[1] Moore's *Life of Sheridan*, published in 1825.—M.

as the most hide-bound and sterile of performers, lying *perdu* through a whole evening for a natural opportunity, or by miserable stratagem creating an artificial one, for exploding some poor starveling jest; and in fact sacrificing to this petty ambition, in a degree never before heard of, the ease and dignity of his life. But it is in the character of a rhetorical orator that he, and his friends on his behalf, have put forward the hollowest pretensions. In the course of the Hastings trial, upon the concerns of paralytic *Begums*, and mouldering queens—hags that, if ever actually existing, were no more to us and our British sympathies than we to Hecuba—did Mr. Sheridan make his capital exhibition. The real value of his speech was never at any time misappreciated by the judicious; for his attempts at the grand, the pathetic, and the sentimental had been continually in the same tone of falsetto and horrible fustian. Burke, however, who was the most double-minded person in the world, cloaked his contempt in hyperbolical flattery; and all the unhappy people who have since written lives of Burke adopt the whole for gospel truth. Exactly in the same vein of tumid inanity is the speech which Mr. Sheridan puts into the mouth of Rolla the Peruvian. This the reader may chance to have heard upon the stage; or, in default of that good luck, we present him with the following fragrant twaddle from one of the Begummiads, which has been enshrined in the praises (*si quid sua carmina possunt*) of many worthy critics. The subject is *Filial Piety*.

"Filial piety," Mr. Sheridan said, "it was impossible by words to describe, but description by words was unnecessary. It was that duty which they all felt and understood, and which required not the powers of language to explain. It was in truth more properly to be called a *principle* than a duty. It required not the aid of memory; it needed not the exercise of the understanding; it awaited not the slow deliberations of reason: it flowed spontaneously from the fountain of our feelings; it was involuntary in our natures; it was a quality of our being, innate and coeval with life, which, though afterwards cherished as a passion, was independent of our mental powers; it was earlier than all intelligence in our souls; it displayed itself in the earliest impulses of the heart, and was an emotion of fondness that returned in smiles of gratitude the affectionate solicitudes, the tender anxieties, the endearing attentions experienced before memory began, but which were not less dear for not being remembered. It was the

sacrament of nature in our hearts, by which the union of the parent and child was sealed and rendered perfect in the community of love; and which, strengthening and ripening with life, acquired vigour from the understanding, and was most lively and active when most wanted."

Now, we put it to any candid reader whether the above Birmingham ware might not be vastly improved by one slight alteration, viz. omitting the two first words, and reading it as a conundrum. Considered as rhetoric, it is evidently fitted "to make a horse sick"; but, as a conundrum in the *Lady's Magazine*, we contend that it would have great success.

How it aggravates the disgust with which these paste-diamonds are now viewed to remember that they were paraded in the presence of Edmund Burke; nay,—*credite posteri*!—in jealous rivalry of his genuine and priceless jewels! Irresistibly, one is reminded of the dancing efforts of Lady Blarney and Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Skeggs against the native grace of the Vicar of Wakefield's family: —"The ladies of the town strove hard to be equally easy, "but without success. *They swam, sprawled, languished, and "frisked*; but all would not do. The gazers, indeed, owned "that it was fine; but neighbour Flamborough observed "that Miss Livy's feet seemed as pat to the music as its "echo." Of Goldsmith it was said in his epitaph,—*Nil tetigit quod non ornavit*: of the Drury Lane rhetorician it might be said with equal truth,—*Nil tetigit quod non fuco adulteravit*.[1] But avaunt, Birmingham! Let us speak of a great man.

All hail to Edmund Burke, the supreme writer of his century, the man of the largest and finest understanding! Upon that word, *understanding*, we lay a stress: for, oh! ye immortal donkeys who have written "about him and about him," with what an obstinate stupidity have ye brayed

[1] Johnson's epitaph on Goldsmith is here incorrectly quoted, as usual. The words were not *Nil tetigit quod non ornavit*—which would be incorrect Latin for "He touched nothing that he did not adorn"—but "*nullum fere scribendi genus non tetigit, nullum quod tetigit non ornavit*." "No kind of writing almost but he touched, none that he touched but he adorned." De Quincey's parody of this for Sheridan is "He touched nothing that he did not corrupt and discolour."—M.

away for one third of a century about that which ye are pleased to call his "fancy." Fancy in your throats, ye miserable twaddlers! As if Edmund Burke were the man to play with his fancy for the purpose of separable ornament! He was a man of fancy in no other sense than as Lord Bacon was so, and Jeremy Taylor, and as all large and discursive thinkers are and must be: that is to say, the fancy which he had in common with all mankind, and very probably in no eminent degree, in him was urged into unusual activity under the necessities of his capacious understanding. His great and peculiar distinction was that he viewed all objects of the understanding under more relations than other men, and under more complex relations. According to the multiplicity of these relations, a man is said to have a *large* understanding; according to their subtlety, a *fine* one; and in an angelic understanding all things would appear to be related to all. Now, to apprehend and detect more relations, or to pursue them steadily, is a process absolutely impossible without the intervention of physical analogies. To say, therefore, that a man is a great thinker, or a fine thinker, is but another expression for saying that he has a *schematizing* (or, to use a plainer but less accurate expression, a figurative) understanding. In that sense, and for that purpose, Burke is figurative: but, understood, as he *has* been understood by the long-eared race of his critics, not as thinking in and by his figures, but as deliberately laying them on by way of enamel or after-ornament,—not as *incarnating*, but simply as *dressing* his thoughts in imagery,—so understood, he is not the Burke of reality, but a poor fictitious Burke, modelled after the poverty of conception which belongs to his critics.

It is true, however, that in some rare cases Burke *did* indulge himself in a pure rhetorician's use of fancy; consciously and profusely lavishing his ornaments for mere purposes of effect. Such a case occurs, for instance, in that admirable picture of the degradation of Europe where he represents the different crowned heads as bidding against each other at Basle for the favour and countenance of Regicide. Others of the same kind there are in his ever-memorable letter on the Duke of Bedford's attack upon him in the

House of Lords[1]; and one of these we shall here cite, disregarding its greater chance for being already familiar to the reader, upon two considerations: first, that it has all the appearance of being finished with the most studied regard to effect; and, secondly, for an interesting anecdote connected with it which we have never seen in print, but for which we have better authority than could be produced perhaps for most of those which are. The anecdote is that Burke, conversing with Dr. Lawrence and another gentleman on the *literary* value of his own writings, declared that the particular passage in the entire range of his works which had cost him the most labour, and upon which, as tried by a certain canon of his own, his labour seemed to himself to have been the most successful, was the following:—

After an introductory paragraph, which may be thus abridged,—"The Crown has considered *me* after long service. "The Crown has paid the Duke of Bedford by advance. "He has had a long credit for any service which he may "perform hereafter. He is secure, and long may he be "secure in his advance, whether he performs any services or "not. His grants are engrafted on the public law of Europe, "covered with the awful hoar of innumerable ages. They "are guarded by the sacred rule of prescription. The "learned professors of the *rights of man*, however, regard "prescription not as a title to bar all other claim, but as a "bar against the possessor and proprietor. They hold an "immemorial possession to be no more than an aggravated "injustice,"—there follows the passage in question:—

"Such are *their* ideas, such *their* religion, and such *their* law. But, as to *our* country and *our* race, as long as the well-compacted structure of our Church and State, the sanctuary, the holy of holies, of that ancient law, defended by reverence, defended by power, a fortress at once and a temple (*templum in modum arcis*[2]), shall stand inviolate on the brow of the British Sion; as long as the British monarchy, not more limited than fenced by the orders of the State, shall, like the

[1] *A Letter to a noble Lord on the attacks made upon Mr. Burke and his Pension in the House of Lords by the Duke of Bedford and the Earl of Lauderdale early in the present Sessions of Parliament*, 1796.—M.

[2] Tacitus of the Temple of Jerusalem.

proud Keep of Windsor, rising in the majesty of proportion, and girt with the double belt of its kindred and coeval towers; as long as this awful structure shall oversee and guard the subjected land: so long the mounds and dykes of the low fat Bedford Level[1] will have nothing to fear from all the pickaxes of all the levellers of France. As long as our sovereign lord the king, and his faithful subjects the lords and commons of this realm,—the triple cord which no man can break; the solemn, sworn, constitutional frank-pledge of this nation; the firm guarantees of each other's being and each other's rights; the joint and several securities, each in its place and order, for every kind and every quality of property and of dignity,—as long as these endure, so long the Duke of Bedford is safe, and we are all safe together: the high from the blights of envy and the spoliation of rapacity; the low from the iron hand of oppression and the insolent spurn of contempt. Amen! and so be it: and so it will be

> 'Dum Domus Æneæ Capitoli immobile saxum
> Accolet, imperiumque Pater Romanus habebit.'"

This was the sounding passage which Burke alleged as the *chef-d'œuvre* of his rhetoric; and the argument upon which he justified his choice is specious, if not convincing. He laid it down as a maxim of composition that every passage in a rhetorical performance which was brought forward prominently, and relied upon as a *key* (to use the language of war) in sustaining the main position of the writer, ought to involve a thought, an image, and a sentiment; and such a synthesis he found in the passage which we have quoted. This criticism, over and above the pleasure which it always gives to hear a great man's opinion of himself, is valuable as showing that Burke, because negligent of trivial inaccuracies, was not at all the less anxious about the larger proprieties and decorums (for this passage, confessedly so laboured, has several instances of slovenliness in trifles), and that in the midst of his apparent hurry he carried out a jealous vigilance upon what he wrote, and the eye of a person practised in artificial effects.

An ally of Burke's upon East Indian politics ought to have a few words of notice, not so much for any power that he actually had as a rhetorician, but because he is sometimes reputed such. This was Sir Philip Francis, who, under his early disguise of Junius, had such a success as no writer of

[1] "*Bedford Level*":—A rich tract of land so called in Bedfordshire.

libels ever will have again.[1] It is our private opinion that this success rested upon a great delusion which has never been exposed. The general belief is that Junius was read for his elegance; we believe no such thing. The pen of an angel would not, upon such a theme as personal politics, have upheld the interest attached to Junius, had there been no other cause in co-operation. Language, after all, is a limited instrument; and it must be remembered that Junius, by the extreme narrowness of his range, which went entirely upon matters of fact and personal interests, still further limited the compass of that limited instrument. For it is only in the expression and management of general ideas that any room arises for conspicuous elegance. The real truth is this: the interest in Junius travelled downwards; he was read in the lower ranks, because in London it speedily became known that he was read with peculiar interest in the highest. This was already a marvel; for newspaper patriots, under the signatures of Publicola, Brutus, and so forth, had become a jest and a byword to the real practical statesman; and any man at leisure to write for so disinterested a purpose as "his country's good" was presumed of course to write in a garret. But here for the first time a pretended patriot, a Junius Brutus, was read even by statesmen, and read with agitation. Is any man simple enough to believe that such a contagion could extend to cabinet ministers and official persons overladen with public business on so feeble an excitement as a little reputation in the art of constructing sentences with elegance,—an elegance which, after all, excluded eloquence and every other *positive* quality of excellence? That this can have been believed shows the readiness with which men swallow marvels. The real secret was this:—Junius was read with the profoundest interest by members of the cabinet, who would not have paid half-a-crown for all the wit and elegance of this world, simply because it was most evident that some traitor was amongst them, and that, either directly by one of themselves, or through some abuse of his confidence by a servant, the secrets of office were betrayed. The circumstances of this breach of trust are now fully

[1] For De Quincey on Sir Philip Francis and the authorship of the Junius Letters see *ante*, Vol. III, pp. 132-143.—M.

known; and it is readily understood why letters which were the channel for those perfidies should interest the ministry of that day in the deepest degree. The existence of such an interest, but not its cause, had immediately become known; it descended, as might be expected, amongst all classes; once excited, it seemed to be justified by the real merits of the letters; which merit again, illustrated by its effects, appeared a thousand times greater than it was; and, finally, this interest was heightened and sustained by the mystery which invested the author. How much that mystery availed in keeping alive the public interest in Junius is clear from this fact,—that since the detection of Junius as Sir Philip Francis the Letters have suddenly declined in popularity, and are no longer the saleable article which once they were.

In fact, upon any other principle, the continued triumph of Junius, and his establishment as a classical author, is a standing enigma. One talent, undoubtedly, he had in a rare perfection—the talent of sarcasm. He stung like a scorpion. But, besides that such a talent has a narrow application, an interest of personality cannot be other than fugitive, take what direction it may; and malignity cannot embalm itself in materials that are themselves perishable. Such were the materials of Junius. His vaunted elegance was, in a great measure, the gift of his subject; general terseness, short sentences, and a careful avoiding of all awkward construction—these were his advantages. And from these he would have been dislodged by a higher subject, or one that would have forced him out into a wider compass of thought. Rhetorician he was none, though he has often been treated as such; for, without sentiment, without imagery, without generalization, how should it be possible for rhetoric to subsist? It is an absolute fact that Junius has not one principle, aphorism, or remark of a general nature in his whole armoury; not in a solitary instance did his barren understanding ascend to an abstraction or general idea, but lingered for ever in the dust and rubbish of individuality, amongst the tangible realities of things and persons. Hence the peculiar absurdity of that hypothesis which discovered Junius in the person of Burke. The opposi-

tion was here too pointedly ludicrous between Burke, who exalted the merest personal themes into the dignity of philosophic speculations, and Junius, in whose hands the very loftiest dwindled into questions of person and party.

Last of the family of rhetoricians, and in a form of rhetoric as florid as the age could bear, came Mr. Canning. "*Sufficit*," says a Roman author, "*in una civitate esse unum rhetorem.*" But, if more were in his age unnecessary, in ours they would have been intolerable. Three or four Mr. Cannings would have been found a nuisance; indeed, the very admiration which crowned his great displays manifested of itself the unsuitableness of his style to the atmosphere of public affairs; for it was of that kind which is offered to a young lady rising from a brilliant performance on the pianoforte. Something, undoubtedly, there was of too juvenile an air, too gaudy a flutter of plumage, in Mr. Canning's more solemn exhibitions; but much indulgence was reasonably extended to a man who in his class was so complete. He was formed for winning a favourable attention by every species of popular fascination. To the eye he recommended himself almost as much as the Bolingbroke of a century before; his voice, and his management of it, were no less pleasing; and upon him, as upon St. John, the air of a gentleman sat with a native grace. Scholarship and literature, as far as they belong to the accomplishments of a gentleman, he too brought forward in the most graceful manner; and, above all, there was an impression of honour, generosity, and candour, stamped upon his manner, agreeable rather to his original character than to the wrench which it had received from an ambition resting too much on mere personal merits. What a pity that this "gay creature of the elements" had not taken his place contentedly, where nature had assigned it, as one of the ornamental performers of the time! His station was with the lilies of the field, which toil not, neither do they spin. He should have thrown himself upon the admiring sympathies of the world as the most dazzling of rhetorical artists, rather than have challenged their angry passions in a vulgar scuffle for power. In that case he would have been alive at this hour [1828];

he would have had a perpetuity of that admiration which to him was as the breath of his nostrils; and would not, by forcing the character of rhetorician into an incongruous alliance with that of trading politician, have run the risk of making both ridiculous.

In thus running over the modern history of Rhetoric, we have confined ourselves to the Literature of England: the Rhetoric of the Continent would demand a separate notice, and chiefly on account of the French pulpit orators. For, laying *them* aside, we are not aware of any distinct body of rhetoric, properly so called, in Modern Literature. Four continental languages may be said to have a literature regularly mounted in all departments, viz. the French, Italian, Spanish, and German; but each of these has stood under separate disadvantages for the cultivation of an ornamented rhetoric. In France, whatever rhetoric they have (for Montaigne, though lively, is too gossiping for a rhetorician) arose in the age of Louis XIV; since which time the very same development of science and public business operated there as in England to stifle the rhetorical impulses, and all those analogous tendencies in arts and in manners which support it. Generally it may be assumed that rhetoric will not survive the age of the ceremonious in manners and the gorgeous in costume. An unconscious sympathy binds together the various forms of the elaborate and the fanciful, under every manifestation. Hence it is that the national convulsions by which modern France has been shaken produced orators,—Mirabeau, Isnard, the Abbé Maury,—but no rhetoricians. Florian, Chateaubriand, and others, who have written the most florid prose that the modern taste can bear, are elegant sentimentalists, sometimes maudlin and semi-poetic, sometimes even eloquent, but never rhetorical. There is no eddying about their own thoughts; no motion of fancy self-sustained from its own activities; no flux and reflux of thought, half meditative, half capricious; but strains of feeling, genuine or not, supported at every step from the excitement of independent external objects.

With respect to the German Literature the case is very peculiar. A chapter upon German Rhetoric would be in

the same ludicrous predicament as Van Troil's chapter on the snakes of Iceland, which delivers its business in one summary sentence, announcing that—snakes in Iceland there are none. Rhetoric, in fact, or any form of ornamented prose, could not possibly arise in a literature in which prose itself had no proper existence till within these seventy years. Lessing was the first German who wrote prose with elegance; and even at this day a decent prose style is the rarest of accomplishments in Germany. We doubt, indeed, whether any German has written prose with grace unless he had lived abroad (like Jacobi, who composed indifferently in French and German), or had at least cultivated a very long acquaintance with English and French models. Frederick Schlegel was led by his comprehensive knowledge of other literatures to observe this singular defect in that of his own country. Even he, however, must have fixed his standard very low, when he could praise, as elsewhere he does, the style of Kant. Certainly in any literature where good models of prose existed Kant would be deemed a monster of vicious diction, so far as regards the construction of his sentences. He does not, it is true, write in the hybrid dialect which prevailed up to the time of our George the First, when every other word was Latin with a German inflexion; but he has in perfection that obtuseness which renders a German taste insensible to all beauty in the balancing and structure of periods, and to the art by which a succession of periods modify each other. Every German regards a sentence in the light of a package, and a package not for the mail-coach but for the waggon, into which his privilege is to crowd as much as he possibly can. Having framed a sentence, therefore, he next proceeds to *pack* it, which is effected partly by unwieldy tails and codicils, but chiefly by enormous parenthetic involutions. All qualifications, limitations, exceptions, illustrations, are stuffed and violently rammed into the bowels of the principal proposition. That all this equipage of accessaries is not so arranged as to assist its own orderly development no more occurs to a German as any fault than that in a package of shawls or of carpets the colours and patterns are not fully displayed. To him it is sufficient that they are *there*. And Mr. Kant,

when he has succeeded in packing up a sentence which covers three close-printed octavo pages, stops to draw his breath with the air of one who looks back upon some brilliant and meritorious performance. Under these disadvantages it may be presumed that German rhetoric is a nonentity; but these disadvantages would not have arisen had there been a German bar or a German senate with any public existence. In the absence of all forensic and senatorial eloquence no standard of good prose style—nay, which is more important, no example of ambition directed to such an object—has been at any time held up to the public mind in Germany; and the pulpit style has been always either rustically negligent or bristling with pedantry.

These disadvantages with regard to public models of civil eloquence have in part affected the Italians. The few good prose writers of Italy have been historians; and it is observable that no writers exist in the department of what are called *Moral Essayists*,—a class which, with us and the French, were the last depositaries of the rhetorical faculty when depressed to its lowest key. Two other circumstances may be noticed as unfavourable to an Italian rhetoric: one, to which we have adverted before, in the language itself, which is too loitering for the agile motion and the το ἀγχιστροφον of rhetoric; and the other in the constitution of the national mind, which is not reflective nor remarkably fanciful, the two qualities most indispensable to rhetoric. As a proof of the little turn for reflection which there is in the Italian mind, we may remind the reader that they have no meditative or philosophic poetry,[1] such as that of our Young, Cowper, Wordsworth, &c.,—a class of poetry which existed very early indeed in the English Literature (*e.g.*, Sir J. Davies, Lord Brooke, Henry More, &c.), and which in some shape has arisen at some stage of almost every European literature.

Of the Spanish rhetoric, *a priori*, we should have augured well; but the rhetoric of their pulpit in past times,

[1] The nearest approach to reflective poetry which we ourselves remember in Italian literature lies amongst the works of Salvator Rosa (the great painter)—where, however, it assumes too much the character of satire.

which is all that we know of it, is vicious and unnatural; whilst, on the other hand, for eloquence profound and heartfelt, measuring it by those heart-stirring proclamations issued in all quarters of Spain during 1808-9, the national capacity must be presumed to be of the very highest order.

We are thus thrown back upon the French pulpit orators as the only considerable body of modern rhetoricians out of our own language. No writers are more uniformly praised; none are more entirely neglected. This is one of those numerous hypocrisies so common in matters of taste, where the critic is always ready with his good word as the readiest way of getting rid of the subject. To blame might be hazardous; for blame demands reasons; but praise enjoys a ready dispensation from all reasons and from all discrimination. Superstition, however, as it is under which the French rhetoricians hold their reputation, we have no thought of attempting any disturbance to it in so slight and incidental a notice as this. Let critics by all means continue to invest them with every kind of imaginary splendour. Meantime let us suggest, as a judicious caution, that French rhetoric should be praised with a reference only to its own narrow standard; for it would be a most unfortunate trial of its pretensions to bring so meagre a style of composition into a close comparison with the gorgeous opulence of the English rhetoric of the same century. Under such a comparison two capital points of weakness would force themselves upon the least observant of critics: first, the defect of striking imagery; and, secondly, the slenderness of the thoughts. The rhetorical manner is supported in the French writers chiefly by an abundance of *ohs* and *ahs*; by interrogatories, apostrophes, and startling exclamations; all which are mere mechanical devices for raising the style; but in the substance of the composition, apart from its dress, there is nothing properly rhetorical. The leading thoughts in all pulpit eloquence, being derived from religion, and in fact the common inheritance of human nature, if they cannot be novel, for that very reason cannot be undignified; but for the same reason they are apt to become unaffecting and trite unless varied and individualized by new infusions of thought and

feeling. The smooth monotony of the leading religious topics, as managed by the French orators, receives under the treatment of Jeremy Taylor at each turn of the sentence a new flexure, or what may be called a separate *articulation*[1]; old thoughts are surveyed from novel stations and under various angles; and a field absolutely exhausted throws up eternally fresh verdure under the fructifying lava of burning imagery. *Human life*, for example, *is short; human happiness is frail*; how trite, how obvious a thesis! Yet, in the beginning of the *Holy Dying*, upon that simplest of themes how magnificent a descant! Variations the most original upon a ground the most universal, and a sense of novelty diffused over truths coeval with human life! Finally, it may be remarked of the imagery in the French rhetoric that it is thinly sown, commonplace, deficient in splendour, and above all merely ornamental; that is to say, it does no more than echo and repeat what is already said in the thought which it is brought to illustrate; whereas in Jeremy Taylor and in Burke it will be found usually to extend and amplify the thought, or to fortify it by some indirect argument of its truth. Thus, for instance, in the passage above quoted from Taylor upon the insensibility of man to the continual mercies of God, at first view the mind is staggered by the apparent impossibility that so infinite a reality, and of so continual a recurrence, should escape our notice; but the illus-

[1] We may take the opportunity of noticing what it is that constitutes the peculiar and characterizing circumstances in Burke's manner of composition. It is this: that under his treatment every truth, be it what it may, every thesis of a sentence, *grows* in the very act of unfolding it. Take any sentence you please from Dr. Johnson, suppose, and it will be found to contain a thought, good or bad, fully preconceived. Whereas in Burke, whatever may have been the preconception, it receives a new determination or inflexion at every clause of the sentence. Some collateral adjunct of the main proposition, some temperament or restraint, some oblique glance at its remote affinities, will invariably be found to attend the progress of his sentences, like the spray from a waterfall, or the scintillations from the iron under the blacksmith's hammer. Hence, whilst a writer of Dr. Johnson's class seems only to look back upon his thoughts, Burke looks forward, and does in fact advance and change his own station concurrently with the advance of the sentences. This peculiarity is no doubt in some degree due to the habit of extempore speaking, but not to that only.

trative image, drawn from the case of a man standing at the bottom of the ocean, and yet insensible to that world of waters above him, from the uniformity and equality of its pressure, flashes upon us with a sense of something equally marvellous in a case which we know to be a physical fact. We are thus reconciled to the proposition by the same image which illustrates it.

In a single mechanical quality of good writing, that is in the structure of their sentences, the French rhetoricians, in common with French writers generally of that age, are superior to ours. This is what in common parlance is expressed (though inaccurately) by the word *style*, and is the subject of the third part of the work before us. Dr. Whately, however, somewhat disappoints us by his mode of treating it. He alleges, indeed, with some plausibility, that his subject bound him to consider style no further than as it was related to the purpose of persuasion. But, besides that it is impossible to treat it with effect in that mutilated section, even within the limits assumed we are not able to trace any outline of the law or system by which Dr. Whately has been governed in the choice of his topics. We find many very acute remarks delivered, but all in a desultory way, which leave the reader no means of judging how much of the ground has been surveyed and how much omitted. We regret also that he has not addressed himself more specifically to the question of English style,—a subject which has not yet received the comprehensive discussion which it merits. In the age of our great rhetoricians it is remarkable that the English language had never been made an object of conscious attention. No man seems to have reflected that there was a wrong and a right in the choice of words, in the choice of phrases, in the mechanism of sentences, or even in the grammar.[1] Men wrote eloquently, because they wrote feelingly; they wrote idiomatically, because they wrote naturally and without affectation; but, if a false or acephalous structure of sentence, if a barbarous idiom or an exotic word happened to present itself, no writer of the seventeenth century seems to have had any such scrupulous sense of the dignity belonging to his own language

[1] Hardly true!—M.

as should make it a duty to reject it or worth his while to remodel a line. The fact is that verbal criticism had not as yet been very extensively applied even to the classical languages; the Scaligers, Casaubon, and Salmasius, were much more critics on things than critics philologically. However, even in that age the French writers were more attentive to the cultivation of their mother tongue than any other people. It is justly remarked by Schlegel that the most worthless writers amongst the French as to matter generally take pains with their diction; or perhaps it is more true to say that with equal pains in their language it is more easy to write well than in one of greater compass. It is also true that the French are indebted for their greater purity from foreign idioms to their much more limited acquaintance with foreign literature. Still, with every deduction from the merit, the fact is as we have said; and it is apparent not only by innumerable evidences in the *concrete*, but by the superiority of all their *abstract* auxiliaries in the art of writing. We English even at this day have no learned grammar of our language; nay, we have allowed the blundering attempt in that department of an imbecile stranger (Lindley Murray) to supersede the learned (however imperfect) works of our own Wallis, Lowth, &c.; we have also no sufficient dictionary; and we have no work at all, sufficient or insufficient, on the phrases and idiomatic niceties of our language, corresponding to the works of Vaugelas and others for the French.[1]

Hence an anomaly not found perhaps in any literature but ours,—that the most eminent English writers do not write their mother tongue without continual violations of propriety. With the single exception of William Wordsworth, who has paid an honourable attention to the purity and accuracy of his English, we believe that there is not one celebrated author of this day who has written two pages consecutively without some flagrant impropriety in the grammar (such as the eternal confusion of the preterite with the past participle, confusion of verbs transitive with intransitive, &c.), or some

[1] Claude Favre de Vaugelas (1585-1650), author of *Sur la Langue Françoise.*—M.

violation more or less of the vernacular idiom.[1] If this last sort of blemish does not occur so frequently in modern books, the reason is that since Dr. Johnson's time the freshness of the idiomatic style has been too frequently abandoned for the lifeless mechanism of a style purely bookish and artificial.

The practical judgments of Dr. Whately are such as will seldom be disputed. Dr. Johnson, for his triads and his antithetic balances, he taxes more than once with a plethoric and tautologic tympany of sentence, and in the following passage with a very happy illustration :—"Sentences which "might have been expressed as simple ones are expanded "into complex ones by the addition of clauses which add "little or nothing to the sense, and which have been com- "pared to the false handles and key-holes with which furniture "is decorated, that serve no other purpose than to *correspond* "*to the real ones.* Much of Dr. Johnson's writings is charge- "able with this fault."

We recollect a little biographic sketch of Dr. Johnson, published immediately after his death, in which, amongst other instances of desperate tautology, the author quotes the well-known lines from the Doctor's imitation of Juvenal—

> "Let observation, with extensive view,
> Survey mankind from China to Peru,"

and contends with some reason that this is saying in effect,—"*Let observation with extensive observation observe mankind* "*extensively.*" Certainly Dr. Johnson was the most faulty writer in this kind of inanity that ever has played tricks with language.[2] On the other hand, Burke was the least so ;

[1] For ample verification of this remark, see the late Professor Hodgson's admirable little book entitled *Errors in the Use of English*,—a wonderful collection of examples of bad English from recent or still living English writers of celebrity. No one escapes.—M.

[2] The following illustration, however, from Dr. Johnson's critique on Prior's *Solomon*, is far from a happy one : "He had infused into it "much knowledge and much thought; had often *polished* it to *elegance*, "*dignified* it with *splendour*, and sometimes *heightened* it to *sublimity* ; "he perceived in it many excellences, and did not perceive that it "wanted that without which all others are of small avail, the power "of *engaging attention* and *alluring curiosity.*" The parts marked in italics are those to which Dr Whately would object as tautologic.

and we are petrified to find him described by Dr. Whately as a writer "*qui variare cupit rem prodigialiter unam*," and as on that account offensive to good taste. The understanding of Burke was even morbidly impatient of tautology; progress and motion, everlasting motion, was a mere necessity of his intellect. We will venture to offer a king's ransom for one unequivocal case of tautology from the whole circle of Burke's writings. The *principium indiscernibilium*, upon which Leibnitz affirmed the impossibility of finding any two leaves of a tree that should be mere duplicates of each other in what we might call the *palmistry* of their natural markings, may be applied to Burke as safely as to nature: no two propositions, we are satisfied, can be found in *him* which do not contain a larger variety than is requisite to their sharp discrimination.

Speaking of the advantages for energy and effect in the licence of arrangement open to the ancient languages, especially to the Latin, Dr. Whately cites the following sentence from the opening of the 4th Book of Q. Curtius:—*Darius, tanti modo exercitus rex, qui, triumphantis magis quam dimicantis more, curru sublimis inierat prælium, per loca quæ prope immensis agminibus compleverat, jam inania et ingenti solitudine vasta, fugiebat.* "The effect," says he, "of the concluding verb, placed where it is, is most striking."[1] The sentence is far enough from a good one; but, confining ourselves to the sort of merit for which it is here cited as a merit peculiar to the Latin, we must say that the very same position of the verb, with a finer effect, is attainable, and in fact often attained, in English sentences; see, for instance, the passage in Richard's soliloquy beginning—*Now is the winter of our discontent*, and ending, *In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.* See also another at the beginning of Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, on the thanklessness of the labour employed upon the *foundations* of truth; which, says he, like those of

Yet this objection can hardly be sustained; the ideas are all sufficiently discriminated; the fault is that they are applied to no real corresponding differences in Prior.

[1] We wish that, in so critical a notice of an effect derived from the fortunate position of a single word, Dr. Whately had not shocked our ears by this hideous collision of a double "*is*," "where it *is, is*." Dreadful!

buildings, "are in the bosom of the earth concealed." The fact is that the common cases of inversion, such as the suspension of the verb to the end, and the anticipation of the objective case at the beginning, are not sufficient illustrations of the Latin structure. All this can be done as well by the English. It is not mere power of inversion, but of self-intrication, and of self-dislocation, which marks the extremity of the artificial structure ; that power by which a sequence of words that naturally is directly consecutive commences, intermits, and reappears at a remote part of the sentence, like what is called drake-stone on the surface of a river. In this power the Greek is almost as much below the Latin as all modern languages ; and in this, added to its elliptic brevity of connexion and transition, and to its wealth in abstractions, "the long-tailed words in *osity* and *ation*," lie the peculiar capacities of the Latin for rhetoric.

Dr. Whately lays it down as a maxim in rhetoric that "elaborate stateliness is always to be regarded as a worse "fault than the slovenliness and languor which accompany a "very loose style." But surely this is a rash position. Stateliness the most elaborate, in an *absolute* sense, is no fault at all ; though it may happen to be so in relation to a given subject, or to any subject under given circumstances. "Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords." Reading these words, who would not be justly offended in point of taste had his feast been characterized by elegant simplicity ? Again, at a coronation, what can be more displeasing to a philosophic taste than a pretended chastity of ornament, at war with the very purposes of a solemnity essentially magnificent ? An imbecile friend of ours, in 1825, brought us a sovereign of a new coinage : "Which," said he, "I admire, because it is so elegantly simple." This, he flattered himself, was thinking like a man of taste. But mark how we sent him to the right about : "And *that*, weak-minded friend, is exactly the thing which a coin ought not to be : the duty of a golden coin is to be as florid as it can, rich with Corinthian ornaments, and as gorgeous as a peacock's tail." So of rhetoric. Imagine that you read these words of introduction, "*And on a set day Tullius Cicero returned thanks to Cæsar on behalf of Marcus*

Marcellus," what sort of a speech is reasonably to be expected? The whole purpose being a festal and ceremonial one, thanksgiving its sole burden first and last, what else than the most "elaborate stateliness"? If it were not stately, and to the very verge of the pompous, Mr. Wolf would have had one argument more than he had, and a better than any he has produced, for suspecting the authenticity of that thrice famous oration.[1]

In the course of his dissertation on style, Dr. Whately very needlessly enters upon the thorny question of the *quiddity*, or characteristic difference, of poetry as distinguished from prose.[2] We could much have wished that he had forborne to meddle with a *quæstio vexata* of this nature, both because in so incidental and cursory a discussion it could not receive a proper investigation, and because Dr. Whately is apparently not familiar with much of what has been written on that subject. On a matter so slightly discussed we shall not trouble ourselves to enter farther than to express our astonishment that a logician like Dr. Whately should have allowed himself to deliver so nugatory an argument as this which follows:—"Any composition in *verse* (and none that "is not) is always called, whether good or bad, a poem, by "all who have no favourite hypothesis to maintain." And the inference manifestly is that it is rightly so called. Now, if a man has taken up any fixed opinion on the subject, no matter whether wrong or right, and has reasons to give for

[1] The substance of all this is found elsewhere in De Quincey. See *ante*, Vol. V, pp. 230-236.—M.

[2] "*As distinguished from prose*":—Here is one of the many instances in which a false answer is prepared beforehand by falsely shaping the question. The accessary circumstance, as "*distinguished from prose*," already prepares a false answer by the very terms of the problem. Poetry *cannot* be distinguished from prose without presupposing the whole question at issue. Those who deny that metre is the characteristic distinction of poetry deny, by implication, that prose *can* be truly opposed to poetry. Some have imagined that the proper opposition was between poetry and science; but, suppose that this is an imperfect opposition, and suppose even that there is no adequate opposition, or counterpole, this is no more than happens in many other cases. One of two poles is often without a name, even where the idea is fully assignable in analysis. But at all events the expression, as "distinguished from prose" is a subtle instance of a *petitio principii*.

his opinion, this man comes under the description of those who have a favourite hypothesis to maintain. It follows, therefore, that the only class of people whom Dr. Whately will allow as unbiassed judges on this question—a question not of fact, but of opinion—are those who have, and who profess to have, no opinion at all upon the subject, or, having one, have no reasons for it. But, apart from this contradiction, how is it possible that Dr. Whately should, in *any* case, plead a popular usage of speech as of any weight in a philosophic argument? Still more, how is it possible in *this* case, where the accuracy of the popular usage is the very thing in debate, so that, if pleaded at all, it must be pleaded as its own justification? Alms-giving, and nothing but alms-giving, is universally called *charity*, and mistaken for the charity of the Scriptures, by all who have no favourite hypothesis to maintain,—*i.e.* by all the inconsiderate. But Dr. Whately will hardly draw any argument from this usage in defence of that popular notion.

In speaking thus freely of particular passages in Dr. Whately's book, we are so far from meaning any disrespect to him that, on the contrary, if we had not been impressed with the very highest respect for his talents by the acuteness and originality which illuminate every part of his book, we could not have allowed ourselves to spend as much time upon the whole as we have in fact spent upon single paragraphs. In reality, there is not a section of his work which has not furnished us with occasion for some profitable speculations; and we are, in consequence, most anxious to see his *Logic*,—which treats a subject so much more important than *Rhetoric*, and so obstinately misrepresented that it would delight us much to anticipate a radical exposure of the errors on this subject taken up from the days of Lord Bacon. It has not fallen in our way to quote much from Dr. Whately *totidem verbis*; our apology for which will be found in the broken and discontinuous method of treatment by short sections and paragraphs which a subject of this nature has necessarily imposed upon him. Had it coincided with our purpose to go more into detail, we could have delighted our readers with some brilliant examples of philosophical penetration, applied to questions interesting from their im-

portance or difficulty with the happiest effect. As it is, we shall content ourselves with saying that in any elementary work it has not been our fortune to witness a rarer combination of analytical acuteness with severity of judgment ; and, when we add that these qualities are recommended by a scholarlike elegance of manner, we suppose it hardly necessary to add that Dr. Whately's is incomparably the best book of its class since Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*.

NOTE.—In what is said at the beginning of this paper of the true meaning of the Enthymeme, as determined by Facciolati, we must be understood with an exclusive reference to Rhetoric. In Logic the old acceptation cannot be disturbed.

STYLE[1]

Part I

Amongst the never-ending arguments for thankfulness in the privilege of a British birth—arguments more solemn even than numerous, and telling more when weighed than when counted, *pondere quam numero*—three aspects there are of our national character which trouble the uniformity of our feelings. A good son, even in such a case, is not at liberty to describe himself as "ashamed." Some gentler word must be found to express the character of his distress. And, whatever grounds of blame may appear against his venerated mother, it is one of his filial duties to suppose either that the blame applies but partially, or, if it should seem painfully universal, that it is one of those excesses to which energetic natures are liable through the very strength of their constitutional characteristics. Such things do happen. It is certain, for instance, that to the deep sincerity of British nature, and to that shyness or principle of reserve which is inseparable from self-respect, must be traced philosophically the churlishness and unsocial bearing for which, at one time, we were so angrily arraigned by the smooth south of Europe. That facile obsequiousness which attracts the inconsiderate in Belgians, Frenchmen, and Italians, is too generally a mixed product from impudence and insincerity. Want of principle

[1] Published first in four successive parts in *Blackwood* for July, September, and October 1840, and February 1841: reprinted by De Quincey in 1859 in vol. xi of his Collective Edition of his Writings,—the same volume which contained the preceding paper.—M.

and want of moral sensibility compose the original *fundus* of southern manners; and the natural product, in a specious hollowness of demeanour, has been afterwards propagated by imitation through innumerable people who may have partaken less deeply, or not at all, in the original moral qualities that have moulded such a manner.

Great faults, therefore—such is my inference—may grow out of great virtues in excess. And this consideration should make us cautious even towards an enemy; much more when approaching so holy a question as the merits of our maternal land. Else, and supposing that a strange nation had been concerned in our judgment, we should declare ourselves mortified and humiliated by three expressions of the British character, too public to have escaped the notice of Europe. First, we writhe with shame when we hear of semi-delirious lords and ladies, sometimes theatrically costumed in caftans and turbans—Lord Byrons, for instance, and Lady Hester Stanhopes—proclaiming to the whole world, as the law of their households, that all nations and languages are free to enter their gates, with one sole exception directed against their British compatriots; that is to say, abjuring by sound of trumpet the very land through which only they themselves have risen into consideration; spurning those for countrymen "without whom" (as M. Gourville had the boldness to tell Charles II)—"without whom, by G—, sir, you yourself are nothing." We all know who *they* are that have done this thing: we *may* know, if we inquire, how many conceited coxcombs are at this moment acting upon that precedent; in which, we scruple not to avow, are contained funds for everlasting satire more crying than any which Juvenal found in the worst days of Rome. And we may ask calmly, Would not death, judicial death, have visited such an act amongst the ancient republics? Next, but with that indulgence which belongs to an infirmity rather than an error of the will, we feel ashamed for the obstinate obtuseness of our country in regard to one and the most effective of the Fine Arts. It will be understood that we speak of Music. In Painting and in Sculpture it is now past disputing that, if we are destined to inferiority at all, it is an inferiority only to the Italians of the fifteenth century—an inferiority which, if

it were even sure to be permanent, we share with all the other malicious nations around us. On that head we are safe. And in the most majestic of the Fine Arts,—in Poetry,—we have a clear and vast pre-eminence as regards all nations. No nation but ourselves has equally succeeded in both forms of the higher poetry, epic and tragic ; whilst of meditative or philosophic poetry (Young's, Cowper's, Wordsworth's)—to say nothing of lyric—we may affirm what Quintilian says justly of Roman satire : "*tota quidem nostra est.*" If, therefore, in every mode of composition through which the impassioned mind speaks a nation has excelled its rivals, we cannot be allowed to suppose any general defect of sensibility as a cause of obtuseness with regard to music. So little, however, is the grandeur of this divine art suspected amongst us generally that a man will write an essay deliberately for the purpose of putting on record his own preference of a song to the most elaborate music of Mozart : he will glory in his shame, and, though speaking in the character of one seemingly confessing to a weakness, will evidently view himself in the light of a candid man, laying bare a state of feeling which is natural and sound, opposed to a class of false pretenders who, whilst servile to rules of artists, in reality contradict their own musical instincts, and feel little or nothing of what they profess. Strange that even the analogy of other arts should not open his eyes to the delusion he is encouraging ! A song, an air, a tune,—that is, a short succession of notes revolving rapidly upon itself,—how could that, by possibility, offer a field of compass sufficient for the development of great musical effects ? The preparation pregnant with the future ; the remote correspondence ; the questions, as it were, which to a deep musical sense are asked in one passage and answered in another ; the iteration and ingemination of a given effect, moving through subtle variations that sometimes disguise the theme, sometimes fitfully reveal it, sometimes throw it out tumultuously to the blaze of daylight : these and ten thousand forms of self-conflicting musical passion,—what room could they find, what opening, what utterance, in so limited a field as an air or song ? A hunting-box, a park-lodge, may have a forest grace and the beauty of appropriateness ; but what if a man should match

such a bauble against the Pantheon, or against the minsters of York and Cologne? A repartee may by accident be practically effective: it has been known to crush a party scheme, and an oration of Cicero's or of Burke's could have done no more; but what judgment would match the two against each other as developments of power? Let him who finds the *maximum* of his musical gratification in a song be assured, by that one fact, that his sensibility is rude and undeveloped. Yet exactly upon this level is the ordinary state of musical feeling throughout Great Britain; and the howling wilderness of the psalmody in most parish churches of the land countersigns the statement. There is, however, accumulated in London more musical science than in any capital of the world. This, gradually diffused, will improve the feeling of the country. And, if it should fail to do so, in the worst case we have the satisfaction of knowing, through Jean Jacques Rousseau, and by later evidences, that, sink as we may below Italy and Germany in the sensibility to this divine art, we cannot go lower than France. Here, however, and in this cherished obtuseness as regards a pleasure so important for human life and at the head of the physico-intellectual pleasures, we find a second reason for quarrelling with the civilisation of our country. At the summit of civilisation in other points, she is here yet uncultivated and savage.

A third point is larger. Here (properly speaking) our quarrel is co-extensive with that general principle in England which tends in all things to set the matter above the manner, the substance above the external show,—a principle noble in itself, but inevitably wrong wherever the manner blends inseparably with the substance.

This general tendency operates in many ways: but our own immediate purpose is concerned with it only so far as it operates upon Style. In no country upon earth, were it possible to carry such a maxim into practical effect, is it a more determinate tendency of the national mind to value the *matter* of a book not only as paramount to the *manner*, but even as distinct from it, and as capable of a separate insulation. What first gave a shock to such a tendency must have been the unwilling and mysterious sense that in some

cases the matter and the manner were so inextricably interwoven as not to admit of this coarse bisection. The one was embedded, entangled, and interfused through the other, in a way which bade defiance to such gross mechanical separations. But the tendency to view the two elements as in a separate relation still predominates, and, as a consequence, the tendency to undervalue the accomplishment of style. Do we mean that the English, as a literary nation, are practically less sensible of the effects of a beautiful style? Not at all. Nobody can be insensible to these effects. And, upon a known fact of history,—viz. the *exclusive* cultivation of popular oratory in England throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,—we might presume a peculiar and exalted sense of style amongst ourselves. Until the French Revolution no nation of Christendom except England had any practical experience of popular rhetoric: any deliberative eloquence, for instance; any forensic eloquence that was made public; any democratic eloquence of the hustings; or any form whatever of public rhetoric beyond that of the pulpit. Through two centuries at least, no nation could have been so constantly reminded of the powers for good and evil which belong to style. Often it must have happened, to the mortification or joy of multitudes, that one man out of windy nothings has constructed an overwhelming appeal to the passions of his hearers, whilst another has thrown away the weightiest cause by his manner of treating it. Neither let it be said that this might not arise from differences of style, but because the triumphant demagogue made use of fictions, and therefore that his triumph was still obtained by means of his matter, however hollow that matter might have proved upon investigation. That case, also, is a possible case; but often enough two orators have relied upon the same identical matter—the facts, for instance, of the slave-trade—and one has turned this to such good account by his arrangements, by his modes of vivifying dry statements, by his arts of illustration, by his science of connecting things with human feeling, that he has left his hearers in convulsions of passion; whilst the other shall have used every tittle of the same matter without eliciting one scintillation of sympathy, without leaving behind one distinct

impression in the memory or planting one murmur in the heart.

In proportion, therefore, as the English people have been placed for two centuries and a quarter (*i.e.* since the latter decennium of James the First's reign) under a constant experience of popular eloquence thrown into all channels of social life, they must have had peculiar occasion to feel the effects of style. But to feel is not to feel consciously. Many a man is charmed by one cause who ascribes the effect to another. Many a man is fascinated by the artifices of composition who fancies that it is the subject which has operated so potently. And even for the subtlest of philosophers who keeps in mind the interpenetration of the style and the matter it would be as difficult to distribute the true proportions of their joint action as, with regard to the earliest rays of the dawn, it would be to say how much of the beauty lay in the heavenly light which chased away the darkness, how much in the rosy colour which that light entangled.

Easily, therefore, it may have happened that, under the constant action and practical effects of style, a nation may have failed to notice the cause *as* the cause. And, besides the disturbing forces which mislead the judgment of the auditor in such a case, there are other disturbing forces which modify the practice of the speaker. That is good rhetoric for the hustings which is bad for a book. Even for the highest forms of popular eloquence the laws of style vary much from the general standard. In the senate, and for the same reason in a newspaper, it is a virtue to reiterate your meaning: tautology becomes a merit: variation of the words, with a substantial identity of the sense and dilution of the truth, is oftentimes a necessity. A man who should content himself with a single condensed enunciation of a perplexed doctrine would be a madman and a *felo-de-se* as respected his reliance upon that doctrine. Like boys who are throwing the sun's rays into the eyes of a mob by means of a mirror, you must shift your lights and vibrate your reflections at every possible angle, if you would agitate the popular mind extensively. Every mode of intellectual communication has its separate strength and separate weakness,— its peculiar embarrassments, compensated by peculiar resources. It is

the advantage of a book that you can return to the past page if anything in the present depends upon it. But, return being impossible in the case of a spoken harangue, where each sentence perishes as it is born, both the speaker and the hearer become aware of a mutual interest in a much looser style, and a perpetual dispensation from the severities of abstract discussion. It is for the benefit of both that the weightier propositions should be detained before the eye a good deal longer than the chastity of taste or the austerity of logic would tolerate in a book. Time must be given for the intellect to eddy about a truth, and to appropriate its bearings. There is a sort of previous lubrication, such as the boa-constrictor applies to any subject of digestion, which is requisite to familiarize the mind with a startling or a complex novelty. And this is obtained for the intellect by varying the modes of presenting it,—now putting it directly before the eye, now obliquely, now in an abstract shape, now in the concrete ; all which, being the proper technical discipline for dealing with such cases, ought no longer to be viewed as a licentious mode of style, but as the just style in respect of those licentious circumstances. And the true art for such popular display is to contrive the best forms for appearing to say something new when in reality you are but echoing yourself ; to break up massy chords into running variations : and to mask, by slight differences in the manner, a virtual identity in the substance.

We have been illustrating a twofold neutralizing effect applied to the advantages otherwise enjoyed by the English people for appreciating the forms of style. What was it that made the populace of Athens and of Rome so sensible to the force of rhetoric and to the magic of language ? It was the habit of hearing these two great engines daily worked for purposes interesting to themselves as citizens, and sufficiently intelligible to command their willing attention. The English amongst modern nations have had the same advantages, allowance being made for the much less intense concentration of the audience. In the ancient republics it was always the same city, and, therefore, the same audience, except in so far as it was spread through many generations. This has been otherwise in England ; and yet, by newspaper reports, any

great effect in one assize town, or electoral town, has been propagated to the rest of the empire, through the eighteenth and the present century. But all this, and the continual exemplification of style as a great agency for democratic effect, have not availed to win a sufficient *practical* respect in England for the arts of composition as essential to authorship. And the reason is because, in the first place, from the intertexture of style and matter, from the *impossibility that the one should affect them otherwise than in connexion with the other*, it has been natural for an audience to charge on the superior agent what often belonged to the lower. This in the first place; and, secondly, because, *the modes of style appropriate to popular eloquence being essentially different from those of written composition*, any possible experience on the hustings, or in the senate, would *pro tanto* tend rather to disqualify the mind for appreciating the more chaste and more elaborate qualities of style fitted for books; and thus a real advantage of the English in one direction has been neutralized by two causes in another.

Generally and ultimately it is certain that our British disregard or inadequate appreciation of style, though a very lamentable fault, has had its origin in the manliness of the British character; in the sincerity and directness of the British taste; in the principle of "*esse quam videri*," which might be taken as the key to much in our manner, much in the philosophy of our lives; and, finally, has had some part of its origin in that same love for the practical and the tangible which has so memorably governed the course of our higher speculations from Bacon to Newton. But, whatever may have been the origin of this most faulty habit, whatever mixed causes now support it, beyond all question it is that such a habit of disregard or of slight regard applied to all the arts of composition does exist in the most painful extent, and is detected by a practised eye in every page of almost every book that is published.

If you could look anywhere with a right to expect continual illustrations of what is good in the manifold qualities of style, it should reasonably be amongst our professional authors; but, as a body, they are distinguished by the most absolute carelessness in this respect. Whether in the choice

of words and idioms, or in the construction of their sentences, it is not possible to conceive the principle of lazy indifference carried to a more revolting extremity. Proof lies before you, spread out upon every page, that no excess of awkwardness, or of inelegance, or of unrhythmical cadence, is so rated in the tariff of faults as to balance in the writer's estimate the trouble of remoulding a clause, of interpolating a phrase, or even of striking the pen through a superfluous word. In our own experience it has happened that we have known an author so laudably fastidious in this subtle art as to have recast one chapter of a series no less than seventeen times: so difficult was the ideal or model of excellence which he kept before his mind; so indefatigable was his labour for mounting to the level of that ideal. Whereas, on the other hand, with regard to a large majority of the writers now carrying forward the literature of the country from the last generation to the next, the evidence is perpetual not so much that they rest satisfied with their own random preconceptions of each clause or sentence as that they never trouble themselves to form any such preconceptions. Whatever words tumble out under the blindest accidents of the moment, those are the words retained; whatever sweep is impressed by chance upon the motion of a period, that is the arrangement ratified. To fancy that men thus determinately careless as to the grosser elements of style would pause to survey distant proportions, or to adjust any more delicate symmetries of good composition, would be visionary. As to the links of connexion, the transitions, and the many other functions of logic in good writing, things are come to such a pass that what was held true of Rome in two separate ages by two great rhetoricians, and of Constantinople in an age long posterior, may now be affirmed of England: the idiom of our language, the mother tongue, survives only amongst our women and children; not, Heaven knows, amongst our women who write books — they are often painfully conspicuous for all that disfigures authorship — but amongst well-educated women not professionally given to literature. Cicero and Quintilian, each for his own generation, ascribed something of the same pre-eminence to the noble matrons of Rome; and more than one writer of the Lower Empire has

recorded of Byzantium that in the nurseries of that city was found the last home for the purity of the ancient Greek. No doubt it might have been found also amongst the innumerable mob of that haughty metropolis, but stained with corruptions and vulgar abbreviations; or, wherever it might lurk, assuredly it was not amongst the noble, the officials, or the courtiers, — else it was impossible that such a master of affectation as Nicetas Choniates,[1] for instance, should have found toleration. But the rationale of this matter lies in a small compass: why are the local names, whenever they have resulted from the general good sense of a country, faithful to the local truth, grave, and unaffected? Simply because they are not inventions of any active faculty, but mere passive depositions from a real impression upon the mind. On the other hand, wherever there is an ambitious principle set in motion for name-inventing, there it is sure to terminate in something monstrous and fanciful. Women offend in such cases even more than men, because more of sentiment or romance will mingle with the names they impose. Sailors again err in an opposite spirit; there is no affectation in their names, but there is too painful an effort after ludicrous allusions to the gravities of their native land —"Big Wig Island," or "the Bishop and his Clerks"—or the name becomes a memento of real incidents, but too casual and personal to merit this lasting record of a name, such as *Point Farewell*, or *Cape Turn-again*. This fault applies to many of the Yankee[2] names, and to many more in the southern and western States of North America, where the earliest population has usually been of a less religious character; and most of all it applies to the names of the back settlements. These people live under influences the most opposite to those of false refinement: coarse necessities, elementary features of peril or embarrassment, primary

[1] Nicetas Acominatus Choniates, a Byzantine historian, died about 1216.—M.

[2] "*Yankee names*":—Foreigners in America subject themselves to a perpetual misinterpretation by misapplying this term. "*Yankee*," in the American use, does not mean a citizen of the United States as opposed to a foreigner, but a citizen of the Northern New England States (Massachusetts, Connecticut, &c.) opposed to a Virginian, a Kentuckian, &c.

aspects of savage nature, compose the scenery of their thoughts, and these are reflected by their names. *Dismal Swamp* expresses a condition of unreclaimed nature, which must disappear with growing civilisation. *Big Bone Lick* tells a tale of cruelty that cannot often be repeated. Buffaloes, like all cattle, derive medicinal benefit from salt ; they come in droves for a thousand miles to lick the masses of rock salt. The new settlers, observing this, lie in ambush to surprise them : 25,000 noble animals in one instance were massacred for their hides. In the following year the usual crowds advanced, but the first who snuffed the tainted air wheeled round, bellowed, and "recoiled" far into his native woods. Meantime the large bones remain to attest the extent of the merciless massacre. Here, as in all cases, there is a truth expressed, but again too casual and special. Besides that, from contempt of elegance, or from defect of art, the names resemble the seafaring nomenclature in being too rudely compounded.

As with the imposition of names, so with the use of the existing language, most classes stand between the pressure of two extremes : of coarseness, of carelessness, of imperfect art, on the one hand ; of spurious refinement and fantastic ambition upon the other. Authors have always been a dangerous class for any language. Amongst the myriads who are prompted to authorship by the coarse love of reputation, or by the nobler craving for sympathy, there will always be thousands seeking distinction through novelties of diction. Hopeless of any audience through mere weight of matter, they will turn for their last resource to such tricks of innovation as they can bring to bear upon language. What care they for purity or simplicity of diction, if at any cost of either they can win a special attention to themselves ? Now, the great body of women are under no such unhappy bias. If they happen to move in polished circles, or have received a tolerable education, they will speak their native language of necessity with truth and simplicity. And, supposing them not to be professional writers (as so small a proportion *can* be, even in France or England), there is always something in the situation of women which secures a fidelity to the idiom. From the greater excitability of

females, and the superior vivacity of their feelings, they will be liable to far more irritations from wounded sensibilities. It is for such occasions chiefly that they seek to be effective in their language. Now, there is not in the world so certain a guarantee for pure idiomatic diction, without tricks or affectation, as a case of genuine excitement. Real situations are always pledges of a real natural language. It is in counterfeit passion, in the mimical situations of novels, or in poems that are efforts of ingenuity and no ebullitions of absolute unsimulated feeling, that female writers endeavour to sustain their own jaded sensibility, or to reinforce the languishing interest of their readers by extravagances of language. No woman in this world, under a movement of resentment from a false accusation, or from jealousy, or from confidence betrayed, ever was at leisure to practise vagaries of caprice in the management of her mother tongue: strength of real feeling shuts out all temptation to the affectation of false feeling.

Hence the purity of the female Byzantine Greek. Such caprices as they might have took some other course, and found some other vent than through their mother tongue. Hence, also, the purity of female English. Would you desire at this day to read our noble language in its native beauty, picturesque from idiomatic propriety, racy in its phraseology, delicate yet sinewy in its composition, steal the mail-bags, and break open all the letters in female handwriting. Three out of four will have been written by that class of women who have the most leisure and the most interest in a correspondence by the post: that class who combine more of intelligence, cultivation, and of thoughtfulness, than any other in Europe — the class of unmarried women above twenty-five — an increasing class[1]; women who, from mere dignity of character, have renounced all prospects of conjugal and parental life, rather than descend into habits unsuitable to their birth. Women capable of

[1] "*An increasing class*":—But not in France. It is a most remarkable moral phenomenon in the social condition of that nation, and one which speaks a volume as to the lower tone of female dignity, that unmarried women at the age which amongst us obtains the insulting name of *old maids* are almost unknown. What shocking sacrifices of sexual honour does this one fact argue!

such sacrifices, and marked by such strength of mind, may be expected to think with deep feeling, and to express themselves (unless where they have been too much biassed by bookish connexions) with natural grace. Not impossibly these same women, if required to come forward in some public character, might write ill and affectedly. They would then have their free natural movement of thought distorted into some accommodation to artificial standards, amongst which they might happen to select a bad one for imitation. But in their letters they write under the benefit of their natural advantages; not warped, on the one hand, into that constraint or awkwardness which is the inevitable effect of conscious exposure to public gaze; yet, on the other, not left to vacancy or the chills of apathy, but sustained by some deep sympathy between themselves and their correspondents.

So far as concerns idiomatic English, we are satisfied, from the many beautiful female letters which we have heard upon chance occasions from every quarter of the empire, that they, the educated women of Great Britain—above all, the interesting class of women unmarried upon scruples of sexual honour—and also (as in Constantinople of old) the nurseries of Great Britain,—are the true and best depositaries of the old mother idiom. But we must not forget that, though this is another term for what is good in English when we are talking of a human and a popular interest, there is a separate use of the language, as in the higher forms of history or philosophy, which ought *not* to be idiomatic. As respects that which *is*, it is remarkable that the same orders cling to the ancient purity of diction amongst ourselves who did so in Pagan Rome: viz. *women*, for the reasons just noticed, *and people of rank*. So much has this been the tendency in England that we know a person of great powers, but who has in all things a one-sided taste, and is so much a lover of idiomatic English as to endure none else, who professes to read no writer since Lord Chesterfield. It is certain that this accomplished nobleman, who has been most unjustly treated from his unfortunate collision with a national favourite, and in part also from the laxity of his moral principles,—where, however, he spoke

worse than he thought —wrote with the ease and careless grace of a high-bred gentleman. But his style is not peculiar: it has always been the style of his order. After making the proper allowance for the continual new infusions into our peerage from the bookish class of lawyers, and for some modifications derived from the learned class of spiritual peers, the tone of Lord Chesterfield has always been the tone of our old aristocracy,—a tone of elegance and propriety, above all things free from the stiffness of pedantry or academic rigour, and obeying Cæsar's rule of shunning *tanquam scopulum* any *insolens verbum*. It is, indeed, through this channel that the solicitudes of our British nobility have always flowed: other qualities might come and go according to the temperament of the individual; but what in all generations constituted an object of horror for that class was bookish precision and professional peculiarity. From the free popular form of our great public schools, to which nine out of ten amongst our old nobility resorted, it happened unavoidably that they were not equally clear of popular vulgarities; indeed, from another cause, *that* could not have been avoided: for it is remarkable that a connexion, as close as through an umbilical cord, has always been maintained between the very highest orders of our aristocracy and the lowest of our democracy, by means of nurses. The nurses and immediate personal attendants of all classes come from the same sources, most commonly from the peasantry of the land; they import into all families alike, into the highest and lowest, the coarsest expressions from the vernacular language of anger and contempt. Whence, for example, it was that about five or six years ago, when a new novel circulated in London, with a private understanding that it was a juvenile effort from two very young ladies, daughters of a ducal house, nobody who reflected at all could feel much surprise that one of the characters should express her self-esteem by the popular phrase that she did not "think small beer of herself." Naturally, papa, the duke, had not so much modified the diction of the two young ladies as Nurse Bridget. Equally in its faults and its merits, the language of high life has always tended to simplicity and the vernacular ideal, recoiling from every mode of bookishness. And in

this, as in so many other instances, it is singular to note the close resemblance between polished England and polished Rome. Augustus Cæsar was so little able to enter into any artificial forms or tortuous obscurities of ambitious rhetoric that he could not so much as understand them. Even the old antique forms of language, where it happened that they had become obsolete, were to him disgusting. Indeed, as regarded the choice and colouring of diction, Augustus was much of a blockhead: a truth which we utter boldly, now that none of his thirty legions can get at us. And probably the main bond of connexion between himself and Horace was their common and excessive hatred of obscurity; from which quality, indeed, the very intellectual defects of both, equally with their good taste, alienated them to intensity.

The pure racy idiom of colloquial or household English, we have insisted, must be looked for in the circles of well-educated women not too closely connected with books. It is certain that books, in any language, will tend to encourage a diction too remote from the style of spoken idiom; whilst the greater solemnity and the more ceremonial costume of regular literature must often demand such a non-idiomatic diction upon mere principles of good taste. But why is it that in our day literature has taken so determinate a swing towards this professional language of books as to justify some fears that the other extreme of the free colloquial idiom will perish as a living dialect? The apparent cause lies in a phenomenon of modern life which on other accounts also is entitled to anxious consideration. It is in newspapers that we must look for the main reading of this generation; and in newspapers, therefore, we must seek for the causes operating upon the style of the age. Seventy years ago this tendency in political journals to usurp upon the practice of books, and to mould the style of writers, was noticed by a most acute observer, himself one of the most brilliant writers in the class of satiric sketchers and personal historians that any nation has produced. Already before 1770 the late Lord Orford, then simply Horace Walpole, was in the habit of saying to any man who consulted him on the cultivation of style,—"Style is it that you want? Oh, go and look into the newspapers for a style." This was said half con-

temptuously and half seriously. But the evil has now become overwhelming. One single number of a London morning paper,—which in half a century has expanded from the size of a dinner napkin to that of a breakfast tablecloth, from that to a carpet, and will soon be forced, by the expansions of public business, into something resembling the mainsail of a frigate,—already is equal in printed matter to a very large octavo volume. Every old woman in the nation now reads daily a vast miscellany in one volume royal octavo. The evil of this, as regards the quality of knowledge communicated, admits of no remedy. Public business, in its whole unwieldy compass, must always form the subject of these daily chronicles. Nor is there much room to expect any change in the style. The evil effect of this upon the style of the age may be reduced to two forms. Formerly the natural impulse of every man was spontaneously to use the language of life ; the language of books was a secondary attainment, not made without effort. Now, on the contrary, the daily composers of newspapers have so long dealt in the professional idiom of books as to have brought it home to every reader in the nation who does not violently resist it by some domestic advantages. Time was, within our own remembrance, that, if you should have heard, in passing along the street, from any old apple-woman such a phrase as "I will *avail myself* of your kindness," forthwith you would have shied like a skittish horse ; you would have run away in as much terror as any old Roman upon those occasions when *bos loquebatur*. At present you swallow such marvels as matters of course. The whole artificial dialect of books has come into play as the dialect of ordinary life. This is one form of the evil impressed upon our style by journalism: a dire monotony of bookish idiom has encrusted and stiffened all native freedom of expression, like some scaly leprosy or elephantiasis, barking and hide-binding the fine natural pulses of the elastic flesh. Another and almost a worse evil has established itself in the prevailing structure of sentences. Every man who has had any experience in writing knows how natural it is for hurry and fulness of matter to discharge itself by vast sentences, involving clause within clause *ad infinitum* ; how difficult it is, and how much a work of

art, to break up this huge fasciculus of cycle and epicycle into a graceful succession of sentences, long intermingled with short, each modifying the other, and arising musically by links of spontaneous connexion. Now, the plethoric form of period, this monster model of sentence, bloated with decomplex intercalations, and exactly repeating the form of syntax which distinguishes an act of Parliament, is the prevailing model in newspaper eloquence. Crude undigested masses of suggestion, furnishing rather raw materials for composition and jottings for the memory than any formal developments of the ideas, describe the quality of writing which *must* prevail in journalism: not from defect of talents,—which are at this day of that superior class which may be presumed from the superior importance of the function itself,—but from the necessities of hurry and of instant compliance with an instant emergency, granting no possibility for revision or opening for amended thought, which are evils attached to the flying velocities of public business.

As to structure of sentence and the periodic involution, *that* scarcely admits of being exemplified in the conversation of those who do not write. But the choice of phraseology is naturally and easily echoed in the colloquial forms of those who surrender themselves to such an influence. To mark in what degree this contagion of bookishness has spread, and how deeply it has moulded the habits of expression in classes naturally the least likely to have been reached by a revolution so artificial in its character, we will report a single record from the memorials of our own experience. Some eight years ago, we had occasion to look for lodgings in a newly-built suburb of London to the south of the Thames.[1] The mistress of the house (with respect to whom we have nothing to report more than that she was in the worst sense a vulgar woman: that is, not merely a low-bred person—so much might have been expected from her occupation—but morally vulgar by the evidence of her own complex precautions against fraud, reasonable enough in so dangerous a capital, but not calling for the very ostentatious display of

[1] This, if taken literally, records a visit of De Quincey to London in 1832.—M.

them which she obtruded upon us) was in regular training, it appeared, as a student of newspapers. She had no children; the newspapers were her children. There lay her studies; that branch of learning constituted her occupation from morning to night; and the following were amongst the words which she—this semi-barbarian—poured from her cornucopia during the very few minutes of our interview; which interview was brought to an abrupt issue by mere nervous agitation upon our part. The words, as noted down within an hour of the occasion, and after allowing a fair time for our recovery, were these:—first, "category"; secondly, "predicament" (where, by the way, from the twofold iteration of the idea—Greek and Roman—it appears that the old lady was "twice armed"); thirdly, "individuality"; fourthly, "procrastination"; fifthly, "speaking diplomatically, would not wish to *commit* herself,"—who knew but that "inadvertently she might even *compromise* both herself and her husband"? sixthly, "would spontaneously adapt the several modes of domestication to the reciprocal interests," &c.; and, finally—(which word it was that settled us: we heard it as we reached the topmost stair on the second floor, and, without further struggle against our instincts, round we wheeled, rushed down forty-five stairs, and exploded from the house with a fury causing us to impinge against an obese or protuberant gentleman, and calling for mutual explanations: a result which nothing *could* account for but a steel bow, or mustachios on the lip of an elderly woman: meantime the fatal word was),—seventhly, "anteriorly." Concerning which word we solemnly depose and make affidavit that neither from man, woman, nor book, had we ever heard it before this unique rencontre with this abominable woman on the staircase. The occasion which furnished the excuse for such a word was this:—From the staircase-window we saw a large shed in the rear of the house; apprehending some nuisance of "manufacturing industry" in our neighbourhood,—"What's that?" we demanded. Mark the answer: "A shed; that's what it is; *videlicet* a shed; and anteriorly to the existing shed there was——"; *what* there was posterity must consent to have wrapt in darkness, for there came on our nervous

seizure, which intercepted further communication. But observe, as a point which took away any gleam of consolation from the case, the total absence of all *malaprop* picturesqueness that might have defeated its deadly action upon the nervous system. No; it is due to the integrity of *her* disease, and to the completeness of *our* suffering, that we should attest the unimpeachable correctness of her words, and of the syntax by which she connected them.

Now, if we could suppose the case that the old household idiom of the land were generally so extinguished amongst us as it was in this particular instance; if we could imagine, as a *universal* result of journalism, that a coarse unlettered woman, having occasion to say "this or that stood in such a place before the present shed," should take as a natural or current formula "anteriorly to the existing shed there stood," &c., what would be the final effect upon our literature? Pedantry, though it were unconscious pedantry, once steadily diffused through a nation as to the very moulds of its thinking, and the general tendencies of its expression, could not but stiffen the natural graces of composition, and weave fetters about the free movement of human thought. This would interfere as effectually with our power of enjoying much that is excellent in our past literature as it would with our future powers of producing. And such an agency has been too long at work amongst us not to have already accomplished some part of these separate evils. Amongst women of education, as we have argued above, standing aloof from literature, and less uniformly drawing their intellectual sustenance from newspapers, the deadening effects have been partially counteracted. Here and there, amongst individuals alive to the particular evils of the age, and watching the very set of the current, there may have been even a more systematic counteraction applied to the mischief. But the great evil in such cases is this, that we cannot see the extent of the changes wrought or being wrought, from having ourselves partaken in them. *Tempora mutantur*; and naturally, if we could review them with the neutral eye of a stranger, it would be impossible for us not to see the extent of those changes. But our eye is *not* neutral; we also have partaken in the changes; *nos et mutamur in illis.*

And this fact disturbs the power of appreciating those changes. Every one of us would have felt, sixty years ago, that the general tone and colouring of a style was stiff, bookish, pedantic, which, from the habituation of our organs, we now feel to be natural and within the privilege of learned art. Direct objective qualities it is always by comparison easy to measure; but the difficulty commences when we have to combine with this outer measurement of the object another corresponding measurement of the subjective or inner qualities by which we apply the measure; that is, when besides the objects projected to a distance from the spectator, we have to allow for variations or disturbances in the very eye which surveys them. The eye cannot see itself; we cannot project from ourselves, and contemplate as an object, our own contemplating faculty, or appreciate our own appreciating power. Biasses, therefore, or gradual warpings, that have occurred in our critical faculty as applied to style, we cannot allow for: and these biasses will unconsciously mask to our perceptions an amount of change in the quality of popular style such as we could not easily credit.

Separately from this change for the worse in the drooping idiomatic freshness of our diction, which is a change that has been going on for a century, the other characteristic defect of this age lies in the tumid and tumultuary structure of our sentences. The one change has partly grown out of the other. Ever since a more bookish air was impressed upon composition without much effort by the Latinized and artificial phraseology, by forms of expression consecrated to books, and by "long-tailed words in *osity* and *ation*,"—either because writers felt that already, in this one act of preference shown to the artificial vocabulary, they had done enough to establish a differential character of regular composition, and on that consideration thought themselves entitled to neglect the combination of their words into sentences or periods; or because there is a real natural sympathy between the Latin phraseology and a Latin structure of sentence,—certain it is and remarkable that our popular style, in the common limited sense of arrangement applied to words or the syntax of sentences, has laboured with two faults that might have been thought incompatible:

it has been artificial, by artifices peculiarly adapted to the powers of the Latin language, and yet at the very same time careless and disordinate. There is a strong idea expressed by the Latin word *inconditus*, *disorganized*, or rather *unorganized*. Now, in spite of its artificial bias, that is the very epithet which will best characterize our newspaper style. To be viewed as susceptible of organization, such periods must already be elaborate and artificial; to be viewed as not having received it, such periods must be hyperbolically careless.

But perhaps the very best illustration of all this will be found in putting the case of English style into close juxtaposition with the style of the French and Germans, our only very important neighbours. As leaders of civilisation, as *powers* in an intellectual sense, there are but three nations in Europe—England, Germany, France. As to Spain and Italy, outlying extremities, they are not moving bodies; they rest upon the past. Russia and North America are the two bulwarks of Christendom east and west. But the three powers *at the centre* are in all senses the motive forces of civilisation. In all things they have the initiation, and they preside.

By this comparison we shall have the advantage of doing what the French express by *s'orienter*, the Germans by *sich orientiren*. Learning one of our bearings on the compass, we shall be able to deduce the rest, and we shall be able to conjecture our valuation as respects the art by finding our place amongst the artists.

With respect to French style, we can imagine the astonishment of an English author practised in composition, and with no previous knowledge of French literature, who should first find himself ranging freely amongst a French library. That particular fault of style which in English books is all but universal absolutely has not an existence in the French. Speaking rigorously and to the very letter of the case, we, upon a large experience in French literature, affirm that it would be nearly impossible (perhaps strictly so) to cite an instance of that cumbrous and unwieldy style which disfigures English composition so extensively. Enough could not be adduced to satisfy the purpose of illustration. And,

to make a Frenchman sensible of the fault as a possibility, you must appeal to some *translated* model.

But why? The cause of this national immunity from a fault so common everywhere else, and so natural when we look into the producing occasions, is as much entitled to our notice as the immunity itself. The fault is inevitable, as one might fancy, to two conditions of mind: hurry in the first place; want of art in the second. The French must be liable to these disadvantages as much as their neighbours; by what magic is it that they evade them or neutralize them in the result? The secret lies here; beyond all nations, by constitutional vivacity, the French are a nation of talkers, and the model of their sentences is moulded by that fact. Conversation, which is a luxury for other nations, is for them a necessity; by the very law of their peculiar intellect and of its social training they are colloquial. Hence it happens that there are no such people endured or ever heard of in France as *al*loquial wits,—people who talk *to* but not *with* a circle: the very finest of their *beaux esprits* must submit to the equities of conversation, and would be crushed summarily as monsters if they were to seek a selfish mode of display or a privilege of lecturing any audience of a *salon* who had met for purposes of *social* pleasure. "*De Monologue*," as Madame de Staël, in her broken English, described this mode of display when speaking of Coleridge, is so far from being tolerated in France as an accomplishment that it is not even understood as a disease. This kind of what may be called irresponsible talk, when a man runs on *perpetuo tenore*, not accountable for any opinion to his auditors, open to no contradiction, liable to no competition, has sometimes procured for a man in England the affix of *River* to his name: *Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis ævum.* In Dryden's happy version,—

> "He flows, and, as he flows, for ever will flow on."

But that has been in cases where the talking impulse was sustained by mere vivacity of animal spirits, without knowledge to support it, and liable to the full weight of Archbishop Huet's sarcasm, that it was a diarrhœa of garrulity, a *fluxe de bouche.* But in cases like that of Coleridge, where the

solitary display, if selfish, is still dignified by a pomp of knowledge, and a knowledge which you feel to have been fused and combined by the genial circumstances of the speaker's position in the centre of an admiring circle, we English do still recognise the *métier* of a professional talker as a privileged mode of social display. People are asked to come and hear such a performer, as you form a select party to hear Thalberg or Paganini. The thing is understood at least with us ; right or wrong there is an understanding amongst the company that you are not to interrupt the great man of the night. You may prompt him by a question ; you may set him in motion ; but to begin arguing against him would be felt as not less unseasonable than to insist on whistling Jim Crow during the *bravuras* and *tours de force* of great musical artists.

In France, therefore, from the intense adaptation of the national mind to real colloquial intercourse, for which reciprocation is indispensable, the form of sentence in use is adjusted to that primary condition ; brief, terse, simple ; shaped to avoid misunderstanding, and to meet the impatience of those who are waiting for their turn. People who write rapidly everywhere write as they talk ; it is impossible to do otherwise. Taking a pen into his hand, a man frames his periods exactly as he would do if addressing a companion. So far the Englishman and the Frenchman are upon the same level. Suppose them, therefore, both preparing to speak : an Englishman in such a situation has no urgent motive for turning his thoughts to any other object than the prevailing one of the moment, viz. how best to convey his meaning. That object weighs also with the Frenchman ; but he has a previous, a paramount, object to watch—the necessity of avoiding *des longueurs*. The rights, the equities of conversation are but dimly present to the mind of the Englishman. From the mind of a Frenchman they are never absent. To an Englishman, the right of occupying the attention of the company seems to inhere in *things* rather than in persons ; if the particular subject under discussion should happen to be a grave one, then, in right of *that*, and not by any right of his own, a speaker will seem to an Englishman invested with the privilege of drawing largely

upon the attention of a company. But to a Frenchman this right of participation in the talk is a *personal* right, which cannot be set aside by any possible claims in the subject; it passes by necessity to and fro, backwards and forwards, between the several persons who are present; and, as in the games of battledore and shuttlecock, or of "hunt the slipper," the momentary subject of interest never *can* settle or linger for any length of time in any one individual without violating the rules of the sport, or suspending its movement. Inevitably, therefore, the structure of sentence must for ever be adapted to this primary function of the French national intellect, the function of communicativeness, and to the necessities (for to the French they *are* necessities) of social intercourse, and (speaking plainly) of interminable garrulity.

Hence it is that in French authors, whatever may otherwise be the differences of their minds, or the differences of their themes, uniformly we find the periods short, rapid, unelaborate: Pascal or Helvetius, Condillac or Rousseau, Montesquieu or Voltaire, Buffon or Duclos,—all alike are terse, perspicuous, brief. Even Mirabeau or Chateaubriand, so much modified by foreign intercourse, in this point adhere to their national models. Even Bossuet or Bourdaloue, where the diffusiveness and amplitude of oratory might have been pleaded as a dispensation, are not more licentious in this respect than their compatriots. One rise in every sentence, one gentle descent, that is the law for French composition; even too monotonously so; and thus it happens that such a thing as a long or an involved sentence can hardly be produced from French literature, though a sultan were to offer his daughter in marriage to the man who should find it. Whereas now, amongst us English, not only is the too general tendency of our sentences towards hyperbolical length, but it will be found continually that, instead of one rise and one corresponding fall—one *arsis* and one *thesis*—there are many. Flux and reflux, swell and cadence, that is the movement for a sentence; but our modern sentences agitate us by rolling fires after the fashion of those internal earthquakes that, not content with one throe, run along spasmodically in a long succession of intermitting convulsions.

It is not often that a single fault can produce any vast

amount of evil. But there are cases where it does; and this is one: the effect of weariness and of repulsion which may arise from this single vice of unwieldly comprehensiveness in the structure of sentences cannot better be illustrated than by a frank exposure of what often happens to ourselves, and (as we differ as to this case only by consciously noticing what all feel) must often happen to others. In the evening, when it is natural that we should feel a craving for rest, some book lies near us which is written in a style clear, tranquil, easy to follow. Just at that moment comes in the wet newspaper, dripping with the dewy freshness of its news; and even in its parliamentary memorials promising so much interest that, let them be treated in what manner they may, merely for the subjects they are often commandingly attractive. The attraction indeed is but too potent; the interest but too exciting. Yet, after all, many times we lay aside the journal, and we acquiesce in the gentler stimulation of the book. Simply the news we may read; but the discussions, whether direct from the editor, or reported from the Parliament, we refuse or we delay. And why? It is the subject, perhaps you think; it is the great political question, too agitating by the consequences it may happen to involve. No. All this, if treated in a winning style, we could bear. It is the effort, the toil, the exertion of mind requisite to follow the discussion through endless and labyrinthine sentences; this it is that compels us to forgo the journal or to lay it aside until the next morning.

Those who are not accustomed to watch the effects of composition upon the feelings, or have had little experience in voluminous reading pursued for weeks, would scarcely imagine how much of downright physical exhaustion is produced by what is technically called the *periodic* style of writing: it is not the length, the απεραντολογια, the paralytic flux of words,—it is not even the cumbrous involution of parts within parts,—separately considered, that bears so heavily upon the attention. It is the suspense, the holding-on of the mind until what is called the αποδοσις, or coming round of the sentence commences; this it is which wears out the faculty of attention. A sentence, for example, begins with a series of *ifs*; perhaps a dozen lines are occupied with

expanding the conditions under which something is affirmed or denied: here you cannot dismiss and have done with the ideas as you go along, for as yet all is hypothetic; all is suspended in air. The conditions are not fully to be understood until you are acquainted with the dependency; you must give a separate attention to each clause of this complex hypothesis, and yet, having done *that* by a painful effort, you have done nothing at all; for you must exercise a reacting attention through the corresponding latter section, in order to follow out its relations to all parts of the hypothesis which sustains it. In fact, under the rude yet also artificial character of newspaper style, each separate monster period is a vast arch, which, not receiving its keystone, not being locked into self-supporting cohesion, until you nearly reach its close, imposes of necessity upon the unhappy reader all the *onus* of its ponderous weight through the main process of its construction. The continued repetition of so Atlantean an effort soon overwhelms your patience, and establishes at length that habitual feeling which causes you to shrink from the speculations of journalists, or (which is more likely) to adopt a worse habit than absolute neglect, which we shall notice immediately.

Meantime, as we have compared ourselves on this important point with the French, let us now complete our promise by noticing our relation in the same point to the Germans. Even on its own account, and without any view to our present purpose, the character of German prose is an object of legitimate astonishment. Whatever is bad in our own ideal of prose style, whatever is repulsive in our own practice, we see there carried to the most outrageous excess. Herod is out-Heroded, Sternhold is out-Sternholded, with a zealotry of extravagance that really seems like wilful burlesque. Lessing, Herder, Paul Richter, and Lichtenberg, with some few beside, either prompted by nature or trained upon foreign models, have avoided the besetting sin of German prose. Any man of distinguished talent, whose attention has been once called steadily to this subject, cannot fail to avoid it. The misfortune of most writers has been that, once occupied with the interest of *things*, and overwhelmed by the embarrassments of disputed *doctrines*, they never advert to any

question affecting what they view, by comparison, as a trifle. The *το docendum*, the thing to be taught, has availed to obscure or even to annihilate for their eyes every anxiety as to the mode of teaching. And, as one conspicuous example of careless style acts by its authority to create many more, we need not wonder at the results, even when they reach a point of what may be called monstrous. Among ten thousand offenders, who carry their neglect of style even to that point, we would single out Immanuel Kant. Such is the value of his philosophy in some sections, and partially it is so very capable of a lucid treatment, intelligible to the plainest man of reflective habits, that within no long interval we shall certainly see him naturalised amongst ourselves: there are particular applications of his philosophy, not contemplated by himself, for which we venture to predict that even the religious student will ultimately be thankful, when the cardinal principles have been brought under a clear light of interpretation. Attention will then be forced upon his style, and facts will come forward not credible without experimental proof. For instance, we have lying before us at this moment his *Critik der Practischen Vernunft* in the unpirated edition of Hartknoch, the respectable publisher of all Kant's great works. The text is therefore authentic, and, being a fourth edition (Riga, 1797), must be presumed to have benefited by the author's careful revision. We have no time for search; but, on barely throwing open the book, we see a sentence at pp. 70, 71, exactly covering one whole octavo page of thirty-one lines (each line averaging forty-five to forty-eight letters). Sentences of the same calibre, some even of far larger *bore*, we have observed in this and other works of the same author. And it is not the fact taken as an occasional possibility, it is the prevailing character of his style, that we insist on as the most formidable barrier to the study of his writings, and to the progress of what will soon be acknowledged as important in his principles. A sentence is viewed by him, and by most of his countrymen, as a rude mould or elastic form admitting of expansion to any possible extent: it is laid down as a rough outline, and then by superstruction and *epi*-superstruction it is gradually reared to a giddy altitude which no eye can follow. Yielding to his natural impulse of subjoining

all additions, or exceptions, or modifications, not in the shape of separate consecutive sentences, but as intercalations and stuffings of one original sentence, Kant might naturally enough have written a book from beginning to end in one vast hyperbolical sentence. We sometimes see an English Act of Parliament which does literally accomplish that end, by an artifice which in law has a purpose and a use. Instead of laying down a general proposition, which is partially false until it has received its proper restraints, the framer of the act endeavours to evade even this momentary falsehood by coupling the limitations with the very primary enunciation of the truth: *e.g.* A shall be entitled, provided always that he is under the circumstances of *e*, or *i*, or *o*, to the right of X. Thus, even a momentary compliance with the false notion of an absolute unconditional claim to X is evaded; a truth which is only a conditional truth is stated as such from the first. There is, therefore, a theoretic use. But what is the practical result? Why, that, when you attempt to read an Act of Parliament where the exceptions, the secondary exceptions to the exceptions, the limitations and the sublimitations, descend, *seriatim*, by a vast scale of dependencies, the mind finds itself overtasked; the energy of the most energetic begins to droop; and so inevitable is that result that Mr. Pitt, a minister unusually accomplished for such process by constitution of mind and by practice, publicly avowed his inability to follow so trying a conflict with technical embarrassments. He declared himself to be lost in the labyrinth of clauses: the Ariadne's clue was wanting for his final extrication: and he described his situation at the end with the simplicity natural to one who was no charlatan, and sought for no reputation by the tricks of a funambulist: "In the crowd of things excepted and counter-excepted, he really ceased to understand the main point—what it was that the law allowed, and what it was that it disallowed."

We might have made our readers merry with the picture of German prose; but we must not linger. It is enough to say that it offers the counterpole to the French style. Our own popular style, and (what is worse) the *tendency* of our own, is to the German extreme. To those who read German, indeed, German prose, as written by the mob of authors,

presents, as in a Brobdignagian and exaggerating mirror, the most offensive faults of our own.

But these faults—are they in practice so wearisome and exhausting as we have described them? Possibly not; and, where that happens to be the case, let the reader ask himself if it is not by means of an evasion worse in its effects than any fault of style could ever prove in its most overcharged form. Shrinking, through long experience, from the plethoric form of cumulation and "periodic" writing in which the journalist supports or explains his views, every man who puts a business value upon his time slips naturally into a trick of shorthand reading. It is more even by the effort and tension of mind in *holding on* than by the mere loss of time that most readers are repelled from the habit of careful reading. An evil of modern growth is met by a modern remedy. Every man gradually learns an art of catching at the leading words, and the cardinal or hinge joints of transition, which proclaim the general course of a writer's speculation. Now, it is very true, and is sure to be objected, that, where so much is certain to prove mere iteration and teasing *surplusage*, little can be lost by this or any other process of abridgment. Certainly, as regards the particular subject concerned, there may be no room to apprehend a serious injury. Not there, not in any direct interest, but in a far larger interest—indirect for the moment, but the most direct and absolute of all interests for an intellectual being,—the reader suffers a permanent debilitation. He acquires a factitious propensity; he forms an incorrigible habit of desultory reading. Now, to say of a man's knowledge, that it will be shallow, or (which is worse than shallow) will be erroneous and insecure in its foundations, is vastly to underrate the evil of such a habit: it is by reaction upon a man's faculties, it is by the effects reflected upon his judging and reasoning powers, that loose habits of reading tell eventually. And these are durable effects. Even as respects the minor purpose of information, better it is, by a thousandfold, to have read threescore of books (chosen judiciously) with severe attention than to have raced through the library of the Vatican at a newspaper pace. But, as respects the final habits acquired, habits of thinking coherently and of judging soundly, better

that a man should have not read one line throughout his life than have travelled through the journals of Europe by this random process of "reading short."

Yet, by this Parthian habit of aiming at full gallop,—of taking flying shots at conspicuous marks, and, like Parthians also, directing their chance arrows whilst retreating, and revolting with horror from a direct approach to the object,—thus it is that the young and the flexible are trained amongst us under the increasing tyranny of journalism. A large part of the evil, therefore, belongs to style; for it is this which repels readers, and enforces the shorthand process of desultory reading. A large part of the evil, therefore, is of a nature to receive a remedy.

It is with a view to that practical part of the extensive evil that we have shaped our present notice of popular style, as made operative amongst ourselves. One single vice of periodic syntax,—a vice unknown to the literature of Greece, and, until Paterculus,[1] even of Rome (although the language of Rome was so naturally adapted to that vice),—has with us counterbalanced all possible vices of any other order. Simply by the vast sphere of its agency for evil, in the habits of mind which it produces and supports, such a vice merits a consideration which would else be disproportionate. Yet, at the same time, it must not be forgotten that, if the most operative of all vices, after all it is but one. What are the others?

It is a fault, amongst many faults, of such works as we have on this subject of style, that they collect the list of qualities, good or bad, to which composition is liable, not under any principle from which they might be deduced *a priori*, so as to be assured that all had been enumerated, but by a tentative groping, a mere conjectural estimate. The word *style* has with us a twofold meaning: one, the narrow meaning, expressing the mere *synthesis onomaton*, the syntaxis or combination of words into sentences; the other of far wider extent, and expressing all possible relations that can arise between thoughts and words—the total effect of a writer as derived from manner. Style may be viewed as an *organic* thing and as a *mechanic* thing. By organic, we mean that

[1] Velleius Paterculus, Roman historian, born about B.C. 19, died about A.D. 31.—M.

which, being acted upon, reacts, and which propagates the communicated power without loss. By mechanic, that which, being impressed with motion, cannot throw it back without loss, and therefore soon comes to an end. The human body is an elaborate system of organs ; it is sustained by organs. But the human body is exercised as a machine, and as such may be viewed in the arts of riding, dancing, leaping, &c., subject to the laws of motion and equilibrium. Now, the use of words is an organic thing, in so far as language is connected with thoughts, and modified by thoughts. It is a mechanic thing, in so far as words in combination determine or modify each other. The science of style as an organ of thought, of style in relation to the ideas and feelings, might be called the *organology* of style. The science of style considered as a machine, in which words act upon words, and through a particular grammar, might be called the *mechanology* of style. It is of little importance by what name these two functions of composition are expressed. But it is of great importance not to confound the functions : that function by which style maintains a commerce with thought, and that by which it chiefly communicates with grammar and with words. A pedant only will insist upon the names ; but the distinction in the ideas, under some name, can be neglected only by the man who is careless of logic.

We know not how far we may be ever called upon to proceed with this discussion. If it should happen that we were, an interesting field of questions would lie before us for the first part (the organology). It would lead us over the ground trodden by the Greek and Roman rhetoricians, and over those particular questions which have arisen by the contrast between the circumstances of the ancients and our own since the origin of printing. Punctuation,[1] trivial as such an innovation may seem, was the product of typo-

[1] This is a most instructive fact ; and it is another fact not less instructive that lawyers in most parts of Christendom, I believe, certainly wherever they are wide-awake professionally, tolerate no punctuation. But why ? Are lawyers not sensible to the luminous effect from a point happily placed ? Yes, they *are* sensible ; but also they are sensible of the false prejudicating effect from a punctuation managed (as too generally it is) carelessly and illogically. Here is the brief abstract of the case. All punctuation narrows the path,

graphy ; and it is interesting to trace the effects upon style even of that one slight addition to the resources of logic. Previously a man was driven to depend for his security against misunderstanding upon the pure virtue of his syntax. Miscollocation or dislocation of related words disturbed the whole sense ; its least effect was to give *no* sense,—often it gave a dangerous sense. Now, punctuation was an artificial machinery for maintaining the integrity of the sense against all mistakes of the writer ; and, as one consequence, it withdrew the energy of men's anxieties from the natural machinery, which lay in just and careful arrangement. Another and still greater machinery of art for the purpose of maintaining the sense, and with the effect of relaxing the care of the writer, lay in the exquisitely artificial structure of the Latin language, which by means of its terminal forms indicated the arrangement, and referred the proper predicate to the proper subject, spite of all that affectation or negligence could do to disturb the series of the logic or the succession of the syntax. Greek, of course, had the same advantage in kind, but not in degree ; and thence rose some differences which have escaped all notice of rhetoricians. Here also would properly arise the question, started by Charles Fox (but probably due originally to the conversation of some far subtler friend, such as Edmund Burke), how far the practice of footnotes—a practice purely modern in its *form*—is reconcilable with the laws of just composition : and whether in virtue, though not in form, such footnotes did not exist for the ancients, by an evasion we could point out. The question is clearly one which grows out of style in its relations to thought : how far, viz., such an excrescence as a note argues that the sentence to which it is attached has not received the benefit of a full development for the conception involved ; whether, if thrown into the furnace again and

which is else unlimited ; and (*by* narrowing it) may chance to guide the reader into the right groove amongst several that are *not* right. But also punctuation has the effect very often (and almost always has the power) of biassing and predetermining the reader to an erroneous choice of meaning. Better, therefore, no guide at all than one which is likely enough to lead astray, and which must always be suspected and mistrusted, inasmuch as very nearly always it has the *power* to lead astray.

re-melted, it might not be so recast as to absorb the redundancy which had previously flowed over into a note. Under this head would fall not only all the differential questions of style and composition between us and the ancients, but also the questions of merit as fairly distributed amongst the moderns compared with each other. The French, as we recently insisted, undoubtedly possess one vast advantage over all other nations in the good taste which governs the arrangement of their sentences; in the simplicity (a strange pretension to make for anything French) of the modulation under which their thoughts flow; in the absence of all cumbrous involution, and in the quick succession of their periods. In reality this invaluable merit tends to an excess; and the *style coupé* as opposed to the *style soutenu*, flippancy opposed to solemnity, the subsultory to the continuous, these are the too frequent extremities to which the French manner betrays men. Better, however, to be flippant than by a revolting form of tumour and perplexity to lead men into habits of intellect such as result from the modern vice of English style. Still, with all its practical value, it is evident that the intellectual merits of the French style are but small. They are chiefly negative, in the first place; and, secondly, founded in the accident of their colloquial necessities. The law of conversation has prescribed the model of their sentences, and in that law there is quite as much of self-interest at work as of respect for equity. *Hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim.* Give and take is the rule; and he who expects to be heard must condescend to listen; which necessity for both parties binds over both to be brief. Brevity so won could at any rate have little merit, and it is certain that for profound thinking it must sometimes be a hindrance. In order to be brief a man must take a short sweep of view; his range of thought cannot be extensive; and such a rule, applied to a general method of thinking, is fitted rather to aphorisms and maxims, as upon a known subject, than to any process of investigation as upon a subject yet to be fathomed. Advancing still further into the examination of style as the organ of thinking, we should find occasion to see the prodigious defects of the French in all the higher qualities of prose composition. One advantage, for a practical

purpose of life, is sadly counterbalanced by numerous faults, many of which are faults of *stamina*, lying not in any corrigible defects, but in such as imply penury of thinking from radical inaptitude in the thinking faculty to connect itself with the feeling and with the creative faculty of the imagination. There are many other researches belonging to this subtlest of subjects, affecting both the logic and the ornaments of style, which would fall under the head of organology. But for instant practical use, though far less difficult for investigation, yet for that reason far more tangible and appreciable, would be all the suggestions proper to the other head of mechanology. Half a dozen rules for evading the most frequently recurring forms of awkwardness, of obscurity, of misproportion, and of double meaning, would do more to assist a writer in practice, laid under some necessity of hurry, than volumes of general disquisition. It makes us blush to add that even grammar is so little of a perfect attainment amongst us that, with two or three exceptions (one being Shakspere, whom some affect to consider as belonging to a semi-barbarous age), we have never seen the writer, through a circuit of prodigious reading, who has not sometimes violated the accidence or the syntax of English grammar.

Whatever becomes of our own possible speculations, we shall conclude with insisting on the growing necessity of style as a practical interest of daily life. Upon subjects of public concern, and in proportion to that concern, there will always be a suitable (and as letters extend a growing) competition. Other things being equal, or appearing to be equal, the determining principle for the public choice will lie in the style. Of a German book, otherwise entitled to respect, it was said—*er lässt sich nicht lesen*—it does not permit itself to be read, such and so repulsive was the style. Among ourselves this has long been true of newspapers. They do not suffer themselves to be read *in extenso* ; and they are read short, with what injury to the mind we have noticed. The same style of reading, once largely practised, is applied universally. To this special evil an improvement of style would apply a special redress. The same improvement is otherwise clamorously called for by each man's interest of competition.

Public luxury, which is gradually consulted by everything else, must at length be consulted in style.

Part II

It is a natural resource that whatsoever we find it difficult to investigate as a result we endeavour to follow as a growth. Failing analytically to probe its nature, historically we seek relief to our perplexities by tracing its origin. Not able to assign the elements of its theory, we endeavour to detect them in the stages of its development. Thus, for instance, when any feudal institution (be it Gothic, Norman, or Anglo-Saxon) eludes our deciphering faculty from the imperfect records of its use and operation, then we endeavour conjecturally to amend our knowledge by watching the circumstances in which that institution arose; and, from the necessities of the age, as indicated by facts which have survived, we are sometimes able to trace, through all their corresponding stages of growth, the natural succession of arrangements which such necessities would be likely to prescribe.

This mode of oblique research, where a more direct one is denied, we find to be the only one in our power. And, with respect to the liberal arts, it is even more true than with respect to laws or institutions, because remote ages widely separated differ much more in their pleasures than they can ever do in their social necessities. To make property safe and life sacred,—that is everywhere a primary purpose of law. But the intellectual amusements of men are so different that the very purposes and elementary functions of these amusements are different. They point to different ends as well as different means. The Drama, for instance, in Greece, connects itself with Religion; in other ages, Religion is the power most in resistance to the Drama. Hence, and because the elder and ruder ages are most favourable to a ceremonial and mythological religion, we find the tragedy of Greece defunct before the literary age arose. Aristotle's era may be taken as the earliest era of refinement and literary development. But Aristotle wrote his Essay on the Greek Tragedy just a century after the *chefs-d'œuvre* of that tragedy had been published.

If, therefore, it is sometimes requisite for the proper explanation even of a law or legal usage that we should go to its history, not looking for a sufficient key to its meaning in the mere analogies of our own social necessities, much more will that be requisite in explaining an art or a mode of intellectual pleasure. Why it was that the ancients had no landscape painting, is a question deep almost as the mystery of life, and harder of solution than all the problems of jurisprudence combined. What causes moulded the Tragedy of the ancients could hardly be guessed if we did not happen to know its history and mythologic origin. And, with respect to what is called *Style*, not so much as a sketch, as an outline, as a hint, could be furnished towards the earliest speculations upon this subject, if we should overlook the historical facts connected with its earliest development.

What was it that first produced into this world that celebrated thing called *Prose*? It was the bar, it was the hustings, it was the *Bema* (το βημα). What Gibbon and most historians of the Mussulmans have rather absurdly called the pulpit of the Caliphs should rather be called the rostrum, the Roman military *suggestus*, or Athenian *bema*. The fierce and generally illiterate Mohammedan harangued his troops; preach he could not; he had no subject for preaching.[1] Now, this function of man in almost all states

[1] "*No subject*":—If he had a subject, what was it? As to the sole doctrines of Islam—the unity of God, and the mission of Mahomet as his chief prophet (*i.e.* not predictor or foreseer, but interpreter)—*that* must be presumed known to every man in a Mussulman army, since otherwise he could not have been admitted into the army. But these doctrines might require expansion, or at least evidence? Not at all: the Mussulman believes them incapable of either. But at least the Caliph might mount the pulpit in order to urge the primary duty of propagating the true faith? No; it was *not* the primary duty, it was a secondary duty; else there would have been no option allowed —tribute, death, or conversion. Well then, the Caliph might ascend the pulpit for the purpose of enforcing a secondary duty? No, he could not, because that was no duty of time or place; it was a postulate of the conscience at all times alike, and needed no argument or illustration. Why, then, what *was* it that the Caliph talked about? It was this: He praised the man who had cut most throats; he pronounced the funeral panegyric of him who had his own throat cut under the banners of the Prophet; he explained the prudential merits of the next movement or of the next campaign. In fact, he did pre-

of society, the function of public haranguing, was, for the Pagan man who had no printing-press, more of a mere necessity through every mode of public life than it is for the modern man of Christian light; for, as to the modern man of Mohammedan twilight, his perfect bigotry denies him this characteristic resource of Christian energies. Just four centuries have we of the Cross propagated our light by this memorable invention; just four centuries have the slaves of the Crescent clung to their darkness by rejecting it. Christianity signs her name; Islamism makes her mark. And the great doctors of the Mussulmans take their stand precisely where Jack Cade took *his* a few years after printing had been discovered. Jack and they both made it felony to be found with a spelling-book, and sorcery to deal with syntax.

Yet, with these differences, all of us alike, Pagan, Mussulman, Christian, have practised the arts of public speaking as the most indispensable resource of public administration and of private intrigue. Whether the purpose were to pursue the interests of legislation, or to conduct the business of jurisprudence, or to bring the merits of great citizens pathetically before their countrymen; or (if the state were democratic enough) oftentimes to explain the conduct of the executive government; oftentimes also to prosecute a scheme of personal ambition: whether the audience were a mob, a

cisely what Pericles did, what Scipio did, what Cæsar did, what it was a regular part of the Roman Imperator's commission to do, both before a battle and after a battle, and universally under any circumstances which make an explanation necessary. What is now done in "general orders" was then committed to a *viva voce* communication. Trifling communications probably devolved on the six centurions of each cohort (or regiment); graver communications were reserved to the Imperator, surrounded by his staff. Why we should mislead the student by calling this solemnity of addressing an army from a *tribunal* or *suggestus* by the irrelevant name of preaching from a pulpit can only be understood by those who perceive the false view taken of the Mohammedan faith and its relation to the human mind. It was certainly a poor plagiarism from the Judaic and the Christian creeds; but it did not rise so high as to conceive of any truth that needed or that admitted intellectual development, or that was susceptible of exposition and argument. However, if we will have it that the Caliph preached, then did his lieutenant say *Amen*. If Omar was a parson, then certainly Caled was his clerk.

senate, a judicial tribunal, or an army: equally (though not in equal degrees) for the Pagan of 2500 years back, and for us moderns, the arts of public speaking, and consequently of prose as opposed to metrical composition, have been the capital engine, the one great intellectual machine of civil life.

This to some people may seem a matter of course. "Would you have men speak in rhyme?" We answer that, when society comes into a state of refinement, the total uses of language are developed in common with other arts; but originally, and whilst man was in his primitive condition of simplicity, it must have seemed an unnatural, nay an absurd, thing to speak in prose. For in those elder days the sole justifying or exciting cases for a public harangue would be cases connected with impassioned motives. Rare they would be, as they had need to be, where both the "hon. gentleman" who moves, and his "hon. friend" who seconds, are required to speak in Trimeter Iambic. Hence the necessity that the oracles should be delivered in verse. Who ever heard of a prose oracle? And hence, as Grecian taste expanded, the disagreeable criticisms whispered about in Athens as to the coarse quality of the verses that proceeded from Delphi. It was like bad Latin from Oxford. Apollo himself to turn out of his own temple, in the very age of Sophocles, such Birmingham hexameters as sometimes astonished Greece, was like our English court keeping a Stephen Duck, the thresher, for the national poet-laureate, at a time when Pope was fixing an era in the literature. Metre fell to a discount in such learned times. But in itself metre must always have been the earliest vehicle for public enunciations of truth among men, for these obvious reasons:—1. That, if metre rises above the standard of ordinary household life, so must any truth of importance and singularity enough to challenge a public utterance; 2. That, because religious communications will always have taken a metrical form by a natural association of feeling, whatsoever is invested with a privileged character will seek something of a religious sanction by assuming the same external shape; and, 3. That expressions, or emphatic verbal forms, which are naturally courted for the sake of pointed effect, receive a

justification from metre, as being already a departure from common usage to begin with, whereas in plain prose they would appear so many affectations. Metre is naturally and necessarily adopted in cases of impassioned themes, for the very obvious reason that rhythmus is both a cause of impassioned feeling, an ally of such feeling, and a natural effect of it; but upon other subjects, *not* impassioned, metre is also a subtle ally, because it serves to introduce and to reconcile with our sense of propriety various arts of condensation, of antithesis, and other rhetorical effects, which, without the metre (as a key for harmonizing them) would strike the feelings as unnatural or as full of affectation. Interrogations, for example, passionate ejaculations, &c., seem no more than natural when metre (acting as a key) has attuned and prepared the mind for such effects. The metre raises the tone of colouring so as to introduce richer tints without shocking or harshly jarring upon the presiding key, when without this semi-conscious pitching of the expectations the sensibility would have been revolted. Hence, for the very earliest stages of society, it will be mere nature that prompts men to metre; it is a mode of inspiration, it is a promise of something preternatural; and less than preternatural cannot be any possible emergency that should call for a public address. Only great truths could require a man to come forward as a spokesman; he is then a sort of interpreter between God and man.

At first, therefore, it is mere nature which prompts metre. Afterwards, as truth begins to enlarge itself—as truth loses something of its sanctity by descending amongst human details—that mode of exalting it, and of courting attention, is dictated by artifice, which originally was a mere necessity of nature raised above herself. For these reasons, it is certain that men challenging high authentic character will continue to speak by metre for many generations after it has ceased to be a mere voice of habitual impulse. Whatsoever claims an oracular authority will take the ordinary external form of an oracle. And, after it has ceased to be a badge of inspiration, metre will be retained as a badge of professional distinction. Pythagoras, for instance, within five centuries of Christ, Thales or Theognis, will adopt metre out of a

secondary prudence ; Orpheus and the elder Sibyl, out of an original necessity.

Those people are, therefore, mistaken who imagine that prose is either a natural or a possible form of composition in early states of society. It is such truth only as ascends from the earth, not such as descends from heaven, which can ever assume an unmetrical form. Now, in the earliest states of society, all truth that has any interest or importance for man will connect itself with heaven. If it does not originally come forward in that sacred character, if it does not borrow its importance from its sanctity, then, by an inverse order, it will borrow a sanctity from its importance. Even agricultural truth, even the homeliest truths of rural industry, brought into connexion with religious inspiration, will be exalted (like the common culinary utensils in the great vision of the Jewish prophet) and transfigured into vessels of glorious consecration. All things in this early stage of social man are meant mysteriously, have allegoric values ; and week-day man moves amongst glorified objects. So that, if any doctrine, principle, or system of truth, should call for communication at all, infallibly the communication will take the tone of a revelation ; and the holiness of a revelation will express itself in the most impassioned form, perhaps with accompaniments of music, but certainly with metre.

Prose, therefore, strange as it may seem to say so, was something of a discovery. If not great invention, at least great courage, would be required for the man who should first swim without the bladders of metre. It is all very easy talking when you and your ancestors for fifty generations back have talked prose. But that man must have had *triplex æs* about his *præcordia* who first dared to come forward with pure prose as the vehicle for any impassioned form of truth. Even the first physician who dared to lay aside the ample wig and gold-headed cane needed *extra* courage. All the Jovian terrors of his traditional costume laid aside, he was thrown upon his mere natural resources of skill and good sense. Who was the first lion-hearted man that ventured to make sail in this frail boat of prose? We believe the man's name is reputed to have been Pherecydes. But, as nothing

is less worth remembering than the mere hollow shell of a name where all the pulp and the kernel is gone, we shall presume Herodotus to have been the first respectable artist in prose. And what was this worthy man's view of prose? From the way in which he connected his several books or "fyttes" with the names of the muses, and from the romantic style of his narratives, as well as from his using a dialect which had certainly become a poetic dialect in literary Greece, it is pretty clear that Herodotus stood, and meant to stand, on that isthmus between the regions of poetry and blank unimpassioned prose which in modern literature is occupied by such works as *Mort d'Arthur*. In Thucydides, we see the first exhibition of stern philosophic prose. And, considering the very brief interval between the two writers,—who stand related to each other, in point of time, pretty much as Dryden and Pope,—it is quite impossible to look for the solution of their characteristic differences in the mere graduations of social development. Pericles, as a young man, would most certainly ask Herodotus to dinner, if business or curiosity ever drew that amiable writer to Athens. As an elderly man, Pericles must often have seen Thucydides at his levees; although by that time the sacrifice of his "social pleasure ill exchanged for power" may have abridged his opportunity of giving "feeds" to literary men. But will anybody believe that the mere advance of social refinement, within the narrow period of one man's public life, could bring about so marvellous a change as that the friend of his youth should naturally write very much in the spirit of Sir John Mandeville,[1] and the friend of his old age like Machiavel or Gibbon? No, no: the difference between these two writers does not reflect the different aspects of literary Greece at two eras so slightly removed, too great to be measured by that scale, as though those of the picturesque Herodotus were a splendid semi-barbarous generation, those of the meditative Thucydides, speculative, political, experimental; but we must look to subjective differences of taste and temperament in the men. The men, by nature, and by powerful determination of original

[1] Reputed date of Mandeville's travels about the middle of the fourteenth century.—M.

sensibility, belong to different orders of intellect. Herodotus was the Froissart of antiquity. He was the man that should have lived to record the crusades. Thucydides, on the other hand, was obviously the Tacitus of Greece, who (had he been privileged to benefit by some metempsychosis dropping him into congenial scenes of modern history) would have made his election for the wars of the French League, or for our Parliamentary war, or for the colossal conflicts which grew out of the French Revolution. The one was the son of nature, fascinated by the mighty powers of chance or of tragic destiny, as they are seen in elder times moulding the form of empires, or training the currents of revolutions. The other was the son of political speculation, delighting to trace the darker agencies which brood in the mind of man—the subtle motives, the combinations, the plots which gather in the brain of "dark viziers" when intrusted with the fate of millions, and the nation-wielding tempests which move at the bidding of the orator.

But these subjective differences were not all. They led to objective differences, by determining each writer's mind to a separate object. Does any man fancy that these two writers imagined, each for himself, the same audience? Or, again, that each represented his own audience as addressed from the same station? The earlier of the two, full of those qualities which fit a man for producing an effect as an artist, manifestly comes forward in a theatrical character, and addresses his audience from a theatrical station. Is it readers whom he courts? No, but auditors. Is it the literary body whom he addresses—a small body everywhere? No, but the public without limitation. Public! but what public? Not the public of Lacedæmon, drunk with the gloomy insolence of self-conceit; not the public of Athens, amiably vain, courteous, affable, refined! No: it is the public of universal Hellas, an august congress representing the total civilisation of the earth,—so that of any man not known at Olympia, prince, emperor, whatever he might call himself, if he were not present in person or by proxy, you might warrantably affirm that he was *homo ignorabilis*—a person of whose existence nobody was bound to take notice; a man to be *ignored* by a grand jury. This representative

champ de Mai Herodotus addressed. And in what character did he address it? What character did he ascribe to the audience? What character did he assume to himself? Them he addressed sometimes in their general character of human beings, but still having a common interest in a central network of civilisation, investing a certain ring-fence, beginning in Sicily and Carthage, whence it ran round through Libya, Egypt, Syria, Persia, the Ionian belt or zone, and terminating in the majestic region of *Men* — the home of liberty, the Pharos of truth and intellectual power, the very region in which they were all at that moment assembled. There was such a collective body, dimly recognised at times by the ancients, as corresponds to our modern Christendom, and having some unity of possible interest by comparison with the unknown regions of Scythias, Indias, and Ethiopias, lying in a far wider circle beyond—regions that, from their very obscurity, and from the utter darkness of their exterior relations, must at times have been looked to with eyes of anxiety as permanently harbouring that possible deluge of savage eruption which, about one hundred and fifty years after, did actually swallow up the Grecian colony of Bactria (or Bokhara), as founded by Alexander; swallowed it so suddenly and so effectually that merely the blank fact of its tragical catastrophe has reached posterity. It was surprised probably in one night, like Pompeii by Vesuvius, or like the planet itself by Noah's flood; or more nearly its fate resembled those starry bodies which have been seen, traced, recorded, fixed in longitude and latitude for generations, and then suddenly are observed to be *missing* by some of our wandering telescopes that keep watch and ward over the starry heavens. The agonies of a perishing world have been going on, but all is bright and silent in the heavenly host. Infinite space has swallowed up the infinite agonies. Perhaps the only record of Bactria was the sullen report of some courier from Susa, who would come back with his letters undelivered, simply reporting that, on reaching such a ferry on some nameless river, or such an outpost upon a heath, he found it in possession of a fierce, unknown race, the ancestors of future Affghans or Tartars.

Such a catastrophe, as menacing by possibility the whole

of civilisation, and under that hypothetical peril as giving even to Greece herself an interest in the stability even of Persia, her sole enemy,—a great resisting mass interjacent between Greece and the unknown enemies to the far north-east or east,—could not but have mixed occasionally with Greek anticipations for the future, and in a degree quite inappreciable by us who know the geographical limits of Asia. To the ancients, these were by possibility, in a strict sense, infinite. The terror from the unknown Scythians of the world was certainly vague and indistinct; but, if that disarmed the terror or broke its sting, assuredly the very same cause would keep it alive, for the peril would often swell upon the eye merely from its uncertain limits. Far oftener, however, those glorious certainties revolved upon the Grecian imagination which presented Persia in the character of her enemy than those remote possibilities which might connect her as a common friend against some horrid enemy from the infinite deserts of Asia. In this character it was that Herodotus at times addressed the assembled Greece, at whose bar he stood. That the intensity of this patriotic idea intermitted at times; that it was suffered to slumber through entire books: this was but an artist's management which caused it to swell upon the ear all the more sonorously, more clamorously, more terrifically, when the lungs of the organ filled once more with breath, when the trumpet-stop was opened, and the "foudroyant" style of the organist commenced the hailstone chorus from Marathon. Here came out the character in which Herodotus appeared. The *Iliad* had taken Greece as she was during the building of the first temple at Jerusalem—in the era of David and Solomon — a thousand years before Christ. The eagle's plume in her cap at that era was derived from Asia. It was the Troad, it was Asia, that in those days constituted the great enemy of Greece. Greece universal had been confederated against the Asia of that day, and, after an Iliad of woes, had triumphed. But now another era of five hundred years has passed since Troy. Again there has been a universal war raging between Greece and a great foreign potentate; again this enemy of Greece is called Asia. But what Asia? The Asia of the *Iliad* was a petty maritime Asia. But Asia

now means Persia; and Persia, taken in combination with its dependencies of Syria and Egypt, means the world, ἡ οἰκουμενη. The frontier line of the Persian Empire "marched" or confined with the Grecian; but now so vast was the revolution effected by Cyrus that, had not the Persians been withheld by their dismal bigotry from cultivating maritime facilities, the Greeks must have sunk under the enormous power now brought to bear upon them. At one blow, the whole territory of what is now Turkey in Asia,—viz. the whole of Anatolia and of Armenia,—had been extinguished as a neutral and interjacent force for Greece. At one blow, by the battle of Thymbra, the Persian armies had been brought nearer by much more than a thousand miles to the gates of Greece.

That danger it is necessary to conceive, in order to conceive that subsequent triumph. Herodotus—whose family and nearest generation of predecessors must have trembled, after the thoughtless insult offered to Sardis, under the expectation of the vast revenge prepared by the Great King—must have had his young imagination filled and dilated with the enormous display of Oriental power, and been thus prepared to understand the terrific collisions of the Persian forces with those of Greece. He had heard in his travels how the glorious result was appreciated in foreign lands. He came back to Greece with a twofold freight of treasures. He had two messages for his country. One was a report of all that was wonderful in foreign lands: all that was interesting from its novelty or its vast antiquity; all that was regarded by the natives for its sanctity, or by foreigners with amazement as a measure of colossal power in mechanics. And these foreign lands, we must remember, constituted the total world to a Greek. Rome was yet in her infant days, unheard of beyond Italy. Egypt and the other dependencies of Persia composed the total map south of Greece. Greece, with the Mediterranean islands, and the eastern side of the Adriatic, together with Macedon and Thrace, made up the world of Europe. Asia, which had not yet received the narrow limitation imposed upon that word by Rome, was co-extensive with Persia; and it might be divided into Asia *cis*-Tigritana, and Asia *trans*-Tigritana: the Euxine and the Caspian were the boundaries to the north; and to one

advancing further the Oxus was the northern boundary, and the Indus the eastern. The Punjab, as far as the river Sutlege,—that is, up to our present British cantonments at Loodiana,—was indistinctly supposed to be within the jurisdiction of the Great King. Probably he held the whole intervening territory of the late Runjeet Singh, as now possessed by the Sikhs. And beyond these limits all was a mere zodiac of visionary splendour, or a dull repetition of monotonous barbarism.

The report which personal travels enabled Herodotus to make of this extensive region, composing neither more nor less than the total map of the terraqueous globe as it was then supposed to exist (all the rest being a mere Nova Zembla in their eyes), was one of two revelations which the great traveller had to lay at the feet of Greece. The other was a connected narrative of their great struggle with the King of Persia. The earth bisected itself into two parts—Persia and Greece. All that was not Persia was Greece: all that was not Greece was Persia. The Greek traveller was prepared to describe the one section to the other section, and, having done this, to relate in a connected shape the recent tremendous struggle of the one section with the other. Here was Captain Cook fresh from his triple circumnavigation of the world: here was Mungo Park fresh from the Niger and Timbuctoo: here was Bruce fresh from the coy fountains of the Nile: here were Phipps, Franklin, Parry, from the Arctic circle: here was Leo Africanus from Moorish palaces: here was Mandeville from Prester John, and from the Cham of Tartary, and

"From Agra and Lahore of Great Mogul."

This was one side of the medal; and on the other was the patriotic historian who recorded what all had heard by fractions, but none in a continuous series. Now, if we consider how rare was either character in ancient times, how difficult it was to travel where no passport made it safe, where no preparations in roads, inns, carriages, made it convenient; that, even five centuries in advance of this era, little knowledge was generally circulated of any region unless so far as it had been traversed by the Roman legions;

considering the vast credulity of the audience assembled, a gulf capable of swallowing mountains, and, on the other hand, that here was a man fresh from the Pyramids and the Nile, from Tyre, from Babylon and the temple of Belus, a traveller who had gone in with his sickle to a harvest yet untouched; that this same man, considered as a historian, spoke of a struggle with which the earth was still agitated; that the people who had triumphed so memorably in this war happened to be the same people who were then listening; that the leaders in this glorious war, whose names had already passed into spiritual powers, were the fathers of the present audience: combining into one picture all these circumstances, one must admit that no such meeting between giddy expectation and the very excess of power to meet its most clamorous calls is likely to have occurred before or since upon this earth. Hither had assembled people from the most inland and most illiterate parts of Greece,—people that would have settled a pension for life upon any man who would have described to them so much as a crocodile or ichneumon. To these people the year of his public recitation would be the meridian year of their lives. He saw that the whole scene would become almost a dramatic work of art: in the mere gratification of their curiosity, the audience might be passive and neutral; but in the history of the war they became almost actors, as in a dramatic scene. This scenical position could not escape the traveller-historian. His work was recited with the exaggeration that belongs to scenic art. It was read probably with gesticulations by one of those thundering voices which Aristophanes calls a "damnable" voice, from its ear-piercing violence.

Prose is a thing so well known to all of us,—most of our "little accounts" from shoemakers, dressmakers, &c., being made out in prose; most of our sorrows and of our joys having been communicated to us through prose, and very few indeed through metre (unless on St. Valentine's day),—that its further history, after leaving its original Olympic cradle, must be interesting to everybody. Who were they that next took up the literary use of Prose? Confining our notice to people of celebrity, we may say that the House of Socrates (*Domus Socratica* is the expression of Horace) were

those who next attempted to popularize Greek prose,—viz. the old gentleman himself, the founder of the concern, and his two apprentices, Plato and Xenophon. We acknowledge a sneaking hatred towards the whole household, founded chiefly on the intense feeling we entertain that all three were humbugs.[1] We own the stony impeachment. Aristotle, who may be looked upon as literary grandson to Socrates, is quite a different person. But for the rest we cherish a sentimental (may we call it a Platonic?) disgust. As relates to the style, however, in which they have communicated their philosophy, one feature of peculiarity is too remarkable to pass without comment. Some years ago, in one of our four or five Quarterly Reviews (*Theological* it was, *Foreign*, or else *Westminster*), a critical opinion was delivered with respect to a work of Coleridge's which opens a glimpse into the true philosophy of prose composition. It was not a very good-natured opinion in that situation, since it was no more true of Coleridge than it is of every other man who adopts the same aphoristic form of expression for his thoughts; but it was eminently just. Speaking of Coleridge's "Aphorisms," the reviewer observed that this detached and insulated form of delivering thoughts was, in effect, an evasion of all the difficulties connected with composition. Every man, as he walks through the streets, may contrive to jot down an independent thought, a shorthand memorandum of a great truth. So far as that purpose is concerned, even in tumultuous London,

"Puræ sunt plateæ, nihil ut meditantibus obstet."

Standing on one leg you may accomplish this. The labour of composition begins when you have to put your separate threads of thought into a loom; to weave them into a continuous whole; to connect, to introduce them; to blow them out or expand them; to carry them to a close. All this evil is evaded by the aphoristic form. This one remark, we repeat, lifts up a corner of that curtain which hangs over the difficult subjects of style and composition. Indicating what is *not* in one form, it points to what *is* in others. It was an original remark, we doubt not, to the reviewer.

[1] See *ante*, Vol. VIII, pp. 2-3, and p. 202.—M.

But it is too weighty and just to have escaped meditative men in former times; and accordingly the very same remark will be found 150 years ago expanded in the *Huetiana.*[1]

But what relation had this remark to the House of Socrates? Did *they* write by aphorisms? No, certainly; but they did what labours with the same radical defect, considered in relation to the true difficulties of composition. Let us dedicate a paragraph to these great dons of literature. If we have any merely English scholars amongst our readers, it may be requisite first to inform them that Socrates himself wrote nothing. He was too much occupied with his talking—"*ambitiosa loquela.*" In this respect Socrates differed, as in some others that we could mention, from the late Mr. Coleridge, who found time both for talking and for writing at the least 25 volumes octavo. From the pupils of Socrates it is that we collect his pretended philosophy; and, as there were only two of these pupils who published, and as one of them intensely contradicts the other, it would be found a hard matter at *Nisi Prius* to extract any verdict as to what it was that constituted the true staple of the Socratic philosophy. We fear that any jury who undertook that question would finally be carted to the bounds of the county, and shot into the adjacent county like a ton of coals. For Xenophon uniformly introduces the worthy henpecked philosopher as prattling innocent nothings, more limpid than small beer; whilst Plato never lets him condescend to any theme less remote from humanity than those of Hermes Trismegistus. One or other must be a liar. And the manner of the philosopher, under these two Boswellian reporters, is not less different than his matter. With Xenophon, he reminds us much of an elderly hen, superannuated a little, pirouetting to "the hen's march," and clucking vociferously; with Plato, he seems much like a deep-mouthed hound in a chase after some unknown but perilous game,—much as such a hound is described by Wordsworth, ranging over the aerial heights of Mount Righi, his voice at times muffled by mighty forests, and then again swelling as he emerges upon the Alpine

[1] *Huetiana*, title of a volume published in 1722, containing relics of Peter Daniel Huet (1630-1721), editor of the Delphin classics, &c. —M.

breezes, whilst the vast intervals between the local points from which the intermitting voice ascends proclaim the storm pace at which he travels. In Plato there is a gloomy grandeur at times from the elementary mysteries of man's situation and origin, snatches of music from some older and Orphic philosophy, which impress a vague feeling of solemnity towards the patriarch of the school, though you can seldom trace *his* movement through all this high and vapoury region. You would be happy, therefore, to believe that there had been one word of truth in ascribing such colloquies to Socrates; but how that can be, when you recollect the philosophic *vappa* of Xenophon, seems to pass the deciphering power of Œdipus.

Now, this body of inexplicable discord between the two evangelists of Socrates, as to the whole sources from which he drew his philosophy, as to the very wells from which he raised it, and the mode of medicating the draught, makes it the more worthy of remark that both should have obstinately adopted the same disagreeable form of composition. Both exhibit the whole of their separate speculations under the form of dialogue. It is always Socrates and Crito, or Socrates and Phædrus, or Socrates and Ischomachus,—in fact, Socrates and some man of straw or good-humoured nine-pin set up to be bowled down as a matter of course. How inevitably the reader feels his fingers itching to take up the cudgels instead of Crito for one ten minutes! Had *we* been favoured with an interview, we can answer for it that the philosopher should not have had it all his own way; there should have been a "scratch" at least between us; and, instead of waiting to see Crito punished without delivering one blow that would "have made a dint in a pound of butter,"[1] posterity should have formed a ring about us, crying out "Pull baker, pull devil," according as the accidents of the struggle went this way or that. If dialogue must be the form, at least it should not have been collusive dialogue. Whereas, with Crito and the rest of the men who were in training for the part of disputants, it was a matter of notoriety that, if they presumed to put in a sly thrust under the ribs of the philosopher, the Socratic partisans, οἱ αμφι τον Σωκρατην,

[1] See *ante*, Vol. VII, p. 71, footnote.—M.

would kick them into the kennel. It was a permanent "cross" that was fought throughout life between Socrates and his obsequious antagonists.

As Plato and Xenophon must have hated each other with a theological hatred, it is a clear case that they would not have harmonized in anything if they had supposed it open to evasion. They would have got another atmosphere had it been possible. Diverging from each other in all points beside, beyond doubt they would have diverged as to this form of dialogue, had they not conceived that it was essential to the business of philosophy. It is plain from this one fact how narrow was the range of conception which the Socratic school applied to the possible modes of dealing with polemic truth. They represented the case thus:—Truth, they fancied, offered itself by separate units, by moments (to borrow a word from dynamics), by what Cicero calls "apices rerum" and "punctiunculæ." Each of these must be separately examined. It was like the *items* in a disputed account. There must be an auditor to check and revise each severally for itself. This process of auditing could only be carried on through a brisk dialogue. The philosopher in monologue was like a champion at a tournament with nobody to face him. He was a chess-player with no opponent. The game could not proceed. But how mean and limited a conception this was, which lay as a basis for the whole Socratic philosophy, becomes apparent to any man who considers any ample body of truth, whether polemic truth or not, in all its proportions. Yet, in all this, we repeat, the Socratic weakness is not adequately exposed. There is a far larger and subtler class of cases where the arguments for and against are not susceptible of this separate valuation. One is valid only through and by a second, which second again is involved in a third; and so on. Thus, by way of a brief instance, take all the systems of Political Economy which have grown up since Turgot and Quesnel. They are all polemic: that is, all have moulded themselves in hostility to some other systems; all had their birth in opposition. But it would be impossible to proceed Socratically with any one of them. If you should attempt to examine Ricardo sentence by sentence, or even chapter for chapter, his apologist would loudly resist

such a process as inapplicable. You must *hold on*; you must keep fast hold of certain principles until you have time to catch hold of certain others—seven or eight, suppose; and then from the whole taken in continuation, but not from any one as an insulated principle, you come into a power of adjudicating upon the pretensions of the whole theory. The Doctrine of Value, for example, could you understand that taken apart? could you value it apart? As a Socratic logician, could you say of it either *affirmatur* or *negatur*, until you see it coming round and revolving in the doctrines of rent, profits, machinery, &c., which are so many functions of value; and which doctrines first react with a weight of verification upon the other?

These, unless parried, are knock-down blows to the Socratic, and therefore to the Platonic, philosophy, if treated as a *modus philosophandi*; and, if that philosophy is treated as a body of doctrines apart from any *modus* or *ratio docendi*, we should be glad to hear what they are,—for we never could find any whatever in Plato or Xenophon which are insisted on as essential. Accidental hints and casual suggestions cannot be viewed as doctrines in that sense which is necessary to establish a separate school. And all the German Tiedemanns and Tennemanns, the tedious men and the tenpenny-men, that have written their twelve or their eighteen volumes *viritim* upon Plato, will find it hard to satisfy their readers unless they make head against these little objections, because these objections seem to impeach the very *method* of the "Socraticæ Chartæ," and, except as the authors or illustrators of a method, the Socratici are no school at all.

But are not we travelling a little out of our proper field in attacking this method? Our business was with this method considered as a *form of style*, not considered as a *form of logic*. True, O rigorous reader! Yet digressions and moderate excursions have a licence.[1] Besides which, on strict consideration, doubts arise whether we *have* been digressing; for whatsoever acted as a power on Greek prose

[1] De Quincey betrays his consciousness here that his paper on "Style" has hitherto been rather digressive for a while, and begins to gird himself for more direct effort.—M.

through many ages, whatsoever gave it a bias towards any one characteristic excess, becomes important in virtue of its relations to our subject. Now, the form of dialogue so obstinately maintained by the earliest philosophers who used prose as the vehicle of their teaching had the unhappy effect of impressing, from the earliest era of Attic literature, a colloquial taint upon the prose literature of that country. The great authority of Socrates, maintained for ages by the windiest of fables, naturally did much to strengthen this original twist in the prose style. About fifty years after the death of Socrates, the writings of Aristotle were beginning to occupy the attention of Greece; and in them we see as resolute a departure from the dialogue form as in his elders of the same house the adherence to that form had been servile and bigoted. His style, though arid from causes that will hereafter be noticed, was much more dignified, or at least more grave and suitable to philosophic speculation, than that of any man before him. Contemporary with the early life of Socrates was a truly great man, Anaxagoras, the friend and reputed preceptor of Pericles. It is probable he may have written in the style of Aristotle. Having great systematic truths to teach, such as solved existing phenomena, and not such as raised fresh phenomena for future solution, he would naturally adopt the form of continuous exposition. Nor do we at this moment remember a case of any very great man who had any real and novel truth to communicate having adopted the form of dialogue, excepting only the case of Galileo.[1] Plato, indeed, is *reputed*, and Galileo is known, to have exacted geometry as a qualification in his students,—that is, in those who paid him a διδακτρον or fee for the privilege of personally attending his conversations; but he demanded no such qualification in his readers, or else we can assure him that very few copies of his *Opera Omnia* would have been sold in Athens. This low qualification it was for the readers of Plato, and still more for those of Xenophon, which operated to diffuse the reputation of Socrates. Besides, it was a rare thing in Greece to see two men sounding the trumpet on behalf of a third;

[1] Refers to Galileo's Dialogue on the Ptolemaic and Copernican Systems of Astronomy, completed 1632.—M.

and we hope it is not ungenerous to suspect that each dallied with the same purpose as our Chatterton and Macpherson,—viz. to turn round on the public when once committed and compromised by some unequivocal applause, saying "Gentlemen of Athens, this idol Socrates is a phantom of my brain: as respects the philosophy ascribed to him, *I* am Socrates,"—or, as Handel (who, in consideration of his own preternatural appetite, had ordered dinner for six) said to the astonished waiter when pleading, as his excuse for not bringing up the dishes, that he waited for the company,—"Yong man, *I* am de gombany."

But in what mode does the conversational taint which we trace to the writings of the Socratici, enforced by the imaginary martyrdom of Socrates, express itself? In what forms of language? By what peculiarities? By what defects of style? We will endeavour to explain. One of the Scaligers (if we remember, it was the elder), speaking of the Greek article ὁ, ἡ, το, called it *loquacissimæ gentis flabellum*. Now, *pace superbissimi viri*, this seems nonsense, because the use of the article was not capricious, but grounded in the very structure and necessities of the Greek language. Garrulous or not, the poor men were obliged, by the philosophy of their tongue, to use the article in certain situations; and, to say the truth, these situations were very much the same as in English. Allowing for a few cases of proper names, participles, or adjectives postponed to their substantives, &c., the two general functions of the article definite, equally in Greek and in English, are: 1*st*, to individualize, as, *e.g.*, "It is not any sword that will do, I will have *the* sword of my father"; and, 2*d*, the very opposite function, viz. to generalize in the highest degree—a use which our best English grammars wholly overlook: as, *e.g.*, "Let *the* sword give way to *the* gown"—not that particular sword, but every sword (where each is used as a representative symbol of the corresponding professions); "*The* peasant presses on the kibes *of the* courtier" (where the class is indicated by the individual). In speaking again of diseases and the organs affected, we usually accomplish this generalization by means of the definite article. We say "He suffered from *a* headache"; but also we say "from *the* headache"; and in-

variably we say, "He died of *the* stone," &c. And, though we fancy it a peculiarity of the French language to say "*Le* cœur lui était navré de douleur," yet we ourselves say "The heart was affected in his case." In all these uses of the definite article there is little real difference between the Greek language and our own. The main difference is in the negative use; in the meaning implied by the absence of the article, which, with the Greeks, expresses our article *a*, but with us is a form of generalization. In all this there was nothing left free to the choice; and Scaliger had no right to find any illustration of Greek levity in what was unavoidable.

But what *we* tax as undignified in the Greek prose style, as a badge of garrulity, as a taint from which the Greek prose never cleansed itself, are all those forms of lively colloquialism, with the fretfulness and hurry and demonstrative energy of people unduly excited by bodily presence and by ocular appeals to their sensibility. Such a style is picturesque, no doubt. So is the Scottish dialect of low life as first employed in novels by Sir Walter Scott; that dialect greatly assisted the characteristic expression; it furnished the benefit of a Doric dialect: but what man in his senses would employ it in a grave work, and speaking in his own person? Now, the colloquial expletives so profusely employed by Plato more than anybody, the forms of his sentences, the forms of his transitions, and other intense peculiarities of the chattering man as opposed to the meditating man, have crept over the face of Greek literature; and, though some people think everything holy which is printed in Greek characters, we must be allowed to rank these forms of expression as mere vulgarities. Sometimes, in Westmoreland, if you chance to meet an ancient father of his valley,—one who is thoroughly vernacular in his talk, being unsinged by the modern furnace of revolution, —you may have a fancy for asking him how far it is to the next town. In which case you will receive for answer pretty nearly the following words:—"Why like, it's gaily nigh like to four mile like." Now, if the pruriency of your curiosity should carry you to torment and vex this aged man by pressing a special investigation into this word *like*, the only result is likely to be that you will kill *him*, and do

yourself no good. Call it an expletive indeed! a filling up! Why to him it is the only indispensable part of the sentence; the sole fixture. It is the balustrade which enables him to descend the stairs of conversation without falling overboard; and, if the word were proscribed by Parliament, he would have no resource but in everlasting silence. Now, the expletives of Plato are as gross, and must have been to the Athenian as unintelligible, as those of the Westmoreland peasant. It is true, the value, the effect to the feelings, was secured by daily use and by the position in the sentence. But so it is to the English peasant. *Like* in his use is a modifying, a restraining, particle, which forbids you to understand anything in a dangerous unconditional sense. But then, again, the Greek particle of transition, that eternal δε, and the introductory formula of μεν and δε! However earnestly people may fight for them, because Greek is now past mending, in fact the δε is strictly equivalent to the *whereby* of a sailor: "whereby I went to London; whereby I was robbed; whereby I found the man that robbed me"! All relations, all modes of succession or transition, are indicated by one and the same particle. This could arise, even as a licence, only in the laxity of conversation. But the most offensive indication of the conversational spirit as *presiding* in Greek prose is to be found in the morbid energy of oaths scattered over the face of every prose composition which aims at rhetorical effect. The literature is deformed with a constant roulade of "by Jove," "by Minerva," &c., as much as the conversation of high-bred Englishmen in the reign of Charles II. In both cases this habit belonged to a state of transition; and, if the prose literature of Greece had been cultivated by a succession of authors as extended as that of England, it would certainly have outworn this badge of spurious energy. That it did not is a proof that the Greek Literature never reached the consummation of art.

Part III

Reader, you are beginning to suspect us. "How long do we purpose to detain people?" For anything that

appears we may be designing to write on to the twentieth century,—for twice thirty years. "And *whither* are we going? towards what object?"—which is as urgent a quære as *how far*. Perhaps we may be leading you into treason, or (which indeed is pretty much the same thing) we may be paving the way to "Repeal." You feel symptoms of doubt and restiveness; and, like Hamlet with his father's ghost, you will follow us no further, unless we explain what it is that we are in quest of.[1]

Our course, then, for the rest of our progress,—the outline of our method,—will pursue the following objects. We shall detain you a little longer on the Grecian Prose Literature; and we shall pursue that Literature within the gates of Latium. What was the Grecian idea of *style*, what the Roman, will appear as a deduction from this review. With respect to the Greeks, we shall endeavour to show that they had not arrived at a full expanded consciousness of the separate idea expressed by *style*; and, in order to account for this failure, we shall point out the deflexion, the bias, which was impressed upon the Greek speculations in this particular by the tendency of their civil life. *That* was made important in the eyes of the speculative critic which was indispensable for the actual practitioner; *that* was indispensable for the actual practitioner which was exacted by the course of public ambition. The political aspirant, who needed a command of fluent eloquence, sought for so much knowledge (and no more) as promised to be available in his own particular mode of competition. The speculative critic or professional master of rhetoric offered just so much information (and no more) as was likely to be sought by his clients. Each alike cultivated no more than experience showed him would be demanded. But in Rome, and for a reason perhaps which will appear worth pausing upon, a subtler conception of style was formed, though still far from being perfectly developed. The Romans, whether worse orators or not than the Grecians, were certainly better rhetoricians. And Cicero, the mighty master of language for the Pagan world, whom we shall summon as our witness, will satisfy us that in this research at least the Roman

[1] See previous footnote, p. 185.—M.

intellect was more searching, and pressed nearer to the undiscovered truth, than the Grecian.

From a particular pasage in the *De Oratore*, which will be cited for the general purpose here indicated of proving a closer approximation on the part of Roman thinkers than had previously been made to the very heart of this difficult subject, we shall take occasion to make a still nearer approach for ourselves. We shall endeavour to bring up our reader to the fence, and persuade him, if possible, to take the leap which still remains to be taken in this field of style. But, as we have reason to fear that he will "refuse" it, we shall wheel him round and bring him up to it from another quarter. A gentle touch of the spur may then perhaps carry him over. Let not the reader take it to heart that we here represent him under the figure of a horse, and ourselves in a nobler character as riding him, and that we even take the liberty of proposing to spur him. Anything may be borne in metaphor. Figuratively, one may kick a man without offence. There are no limits to allegoric patience. But no matter who takes the leap, or how; a leap there is which must be taken in the course of these speculations on style before the ground will be open for absolute advance. Every man who has studied and meditated the difficulties of style must have had a sub-conscious sense of a bar in his way at a particular point of the road thwarting his free movement; he could not have evaded such a sense but by benefit of extreme shallowness. That bar which we shall indicate must be cleared away, thrown down, or surmounted. And then the prospect will lie open to a new map, and a perfect map, of the whole region. It will then become possible for the first time to overlook the whole geography of the adjacencies. An entire theory of the difficulties being before the student, it will at length be possible to aid his efforts by ample *practical* suggestions. Of these we shall ourselves offer the very plainest, viz. those which apply to the mechanology of style. For these there will be an easy opening; they will not go beyond the reasonable limits disposable for a single subject in a literary journal. As to the rest, which would (Germanly speaking) require a "strong" octavo for their full exposition, we shall hold ourselves to have done

enough in fulfilling the large promise we have made—the promise of marking out for subsequent cultivation and development all the possible subdivisions and sections amongst the resources of the rhetorician, all the powers which he can employ, and therefore all the difficulties which he needs to study,—the arts by which he can profit, and, in correspondence with them, the obstacles by which he will be resisted. Were this done, we should no longer see those incoherent sketches which are now circulating in the world upon questions of taste, of science, of practical address, as applied to the management of style and rhetoric; the public ear would no longer be occupied by feeble Frenchmen—Rollin, Rapin, Batteux, Bouhours, Du Bos,[1] and *id genus omne*; nor by the elegant but desultory Blair[2]; nor by scores of others who bring an occasional acuteness or casual information to this or that subsection of their duty, whilst (taken as general guides) they are universally insufficient. No; but the business of rhetoric, the management of our mother-tongue in all offices to which it can be applied, would become as much a matter of systematic art, as regular a subject for training and mechanic discipline, as the science of discrete quantity in Arithmetic, or of continuous quantity in Geometry. But will not *that* be likely to impress a character of mechanic monotony upon style, like the miserable attempts at reforming handwriting? Look at them, touch them, or, if you are afraid of soiling your fingers, hold them up with the tongs; they reduce all characteristic varieties of writing to one form of blank identity, and *that* the very vilest form of scribbling which exists in Europe—viz. to the wooden scratch (as if traced with a skewer) universally prevailing amongst French people. Vainly would Aldorisius apply his famous art (viz. the art of deciphering a man's character from handwriting) to the villainous scrawls which issue from this modern laboratory of pseudo-caligraphy. All pupils under *these* systems write

[1] Rollin, 1661-1741; Rapin, 1661-1725; Batteux, 1713-1780; Bouhours, 1628-1702; Du Bos, 1670-1740.—M.

[2] Dr. Hugh Blair, of the University of Edinburgh; whose Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres were published in 1783. He died in 1800.—M.

alike ; the predestined thief is confounded with the patriot or martyr ; the innocent young girl with the old hag that watches country waggons for victims. In the same indistinguishable character, so far as this reforming process is concerned, would Joseph Hume sign a motion for retrenching three half-crowns per annum from the orphan daughter of a man who had died in battle, and Queen Adelaide write a subscription towards a fresh church for carrying on war, from generation to generation, upon sin and misery.

Now, if a mechanic system of training for style would have the same levelling effects as these false caligraphies, better by far that we should retain our old ignorance. If art is to terminate in a killing monotony, welcome the old condition of inartificial simplicity ! So say you, reader ; ay, but so say we. This does not touch *us* : the mechanism *we* speak of will apply to no meritorious qualities of style, but to its faults, and, above all, to its awkwardness ; in fact, to all that now constitutes the *friction* of style, the needless joltings and retardations of our fluent motion. As to the motion itself in all that is positive in its derivation, in its exciting impulses, in its speed, and its characteristic varieties, it will remain unaffected. The modes of human feeling are inexhaustible ; the forms by which feeling connects itself with thought are indefeasibly natural ; the channels through which both impress themselves upon language are infinite. All these are imperturbable by human art ; they are past the reach of mechanism ; you might as well be afraid that some steam-engine—Atlas, suppose, or Samson (whom the Germans call Simpson)—should perfidiously hook himself to the earth's axis, and run away with us to Jupiter. Let Simpson do his worst ; we defy him. And so of style : in that sense under which we all have an interest in its free movements it will for ever remain free. It will defy art to control it. In that sense under which it ever *can* be mechanized we have all an interest in wishing that it should be so. Our final object therefore is a meritorious one, with no intermixture of evil. This being explained, and our course onwards having been mapped out, let us now proceed with our work, first recapitulating in direct juxtaposition with each other the points of our future movement :—

1. Greek and Latin Literature we shall touch on only for the sake of appraising or deducing the sort of ideas which they had upon the subject of style. It will appear that these ideas were insufficient. At the best they were tentative. 2. From them, however, may be derived a hint, a dim suggestion, of the true question in arrear; and, universally, that goes a great way towards the true answer. "*Dimidium facti*," says the Roman proverb, "*qui bene cœpit, habet*": to have made a good beginning is one half of the work. *Prudens interrogatio*, says a wise modern,—to have shaped your question skilfully,—is, in that sense, and with a view to the answer, a good beginning. 3. Having laid this foundation towards an answer, we shall then attempt the answer itself. 4. After which,—that is, after removing to the best of our power such difficulties to the *higher understanding* as beset the subject of style, rhetoric, composition,—having (if we do not greatly delude ourselves) removed the one great bar to a right theory of style, or a practical discipline of style,—we shall leave to some future work of more suitable dimensions the filling up of our outline. Ourselves we shall confine to such instant suggestions—practical, popular, broadly intelligible—as require no extensive preparation to introduce them on the author's part; no serious effort to understand them on the reader's. Whatever is more than this will better suit with the variable and elastic proportions of a separate book than with the more rigid proportions of a miscellaneous journal.

Coming back, then, for hasty purposes, to Greek Literature, we wish to direct the reader's eye upon a remarkable phenomenon in the history of that literature, and subsequently of all human genius; not *so* remarkable but that multitudes must have noticed it, and yet remarkable enough to task a man's ingenuity in accounting for it. The earliest known occasion on which this phenomenon drew a direct and strong gaze upon itself was in a little historical sketch composed by a Roman officer during the very opening era of Christianity. We speak of the *Historia Romana*, written and published about the very year of the crucifixion by Velleius Paterculus, in the court of Tiberius Cæsar, the introduction to which presents us with a very interesting

outline of general history.[1] The style is sometimes clumsy and unwieldy, but nervous, masculine, and such as became a soldier. In higher qualities, in thoughtfulness, and the spirit of finer observation, it is far beyond the standard of a mere soldier; and it shows, in common with many other indications lying on the face of Roman society at that era, how profoundly the great struggles that had recently convulsed the world must have terminated in that effect which followed in the wake of the French Revolution,—viz. in a vast stimulation to the meditative faculties of man. The agitation, the frenzy, the sorrow of the times, reacted upon the human intellect, and forced men into meditation. Their own nature was held up before them in a sterner form. They were compelled to contemplate an ideal of man far more colossal than is brought forward in the tranquil aspects of society; and they were often engaged, whether they would or not, with the elementary problems of social philosophy. Mere danger forced a man into thoughts which else were foreign to his habits. Mere necessity of action forced him to decide. Such changes went along with the Reformation; such changes went along with the French Revolution; such changes went along with the great recasting of Roman society under the two earliest Cæsars. In every page of Paterculus we read the swell and agitation of waters subsiding from a deluge. Though a small book, it is tumid with revolutionary life. And something also is due, no doubt, to the example of the mighty leader in the Roman Revolution, to the intellectual and literary tastes diffused by him—

"The foremost man of all this world"—

who had first shown the possibility of uniting the military leader's truncheon with the most brilliant *stylus* of the rhetorician. How wonderful and pleasing to find such accomplishments of accurate knowledge, comprehensive reading and study, combined with so searching an intellect, in a man situated as Paterculus, reared amongst camps, amidst

[1] C. Velleius Paterculus, born about B.C. 19, died about A.D. 31. See *ante*, p. 163. His *Historia Romana*, a brief compendium in two books, comes down to A.D. 30.—M.

the hurry of forced marches, and under the privations of solitary outposts! The old race of hirsute centurions how changed, how perfectly regenerated, by the influence of three Cæsars in succession applying a paternal encouragement to Literature!

Admiring this man so much, we have paused to review the position in which he stood. Now, recurring to that remark (amongst so many original remarks) by which, in particular, he connects himself with our subject, we may venture to say that, if it were a very just remark for *his* experience, it is far more so for ours. What he remarked, what he founded upon a review of two nations and two literatures, we may now countersign by an experience of eight or nine. His remark was upon the tendency of intellectual power to gather in clusters,—its unaccountable propensity (he thought it such) to form into separate insulated groups. This tendency he illustrates first in two cases of Grecian literature. Perhaps that might have been an insufficient basis for a general theory. But it occurred to Paterculus in confirmation of his doctrine that the very same tendency had reappeared in his native literature. The same phenomenon had manifested itself, and more than once, in the history of Roman intellect; the same strong *nisus* of great wits to gather and crystallize about a common nucleus. That marked gregariousness in human genius had taken place amongst the poets and orators of Rome which had previously taken place amongst the poets, orators, and artists of Greece. What importance was attached by Paterculus to this interesting remark, what stress he laid upon its appreciation by the reader, is evident from the emphatic manner in which he introduces it, as well as from the conscious disturbance of the symmetry which he incurs rather than suppress it. These are his words:—"Notwithstanding that "this section of my work has considerably outrun the pro- "portions of that model which I had laid down for my "guidance, and although perfectly aware that, in circumstances "of hurry so unrelenting, which, like a revolving wheel or "the eddy of rapid waters, allows me no respite or pause, I "am summoned rather to omit what is necessary than to court "what is redundant: still, I cannot prevail on myself to

" forbear from uttering and giving a pointed expression to a " thought which I have often revolved in my mind, but " to this hour have not been able satisfactorily to account " for in theory (*nequeo tamen temperare mihi quin rem sæpe* " *agitatam animo meo, neque ad liquidum ratione perductam,* " *signem stylo*)." Having thus bespoke the reader's special attention, the writer goes on to ask if any man can sufficiently wonder on observing that eminent genius in almost every mode of its development (*eminentissima cujusque professionis ingenia*) had gathered itself into the same narrow ring-fence of a single generation. Intellects that in each several department of genius were capable of distinguished execution (*cujusque clari operis capacia ingenia*) had sequestrated themselves from the great stream and succession of their fellowmen into a close insulated community of time, and into a corresponding stage of proficiency measured on their several scales of merit[1] (*in similitudinem et temporum et profectuum semetipsa ab aliis separaverunt*). Without giving *all* the exemplifications by which Paterculus has supported this thesis, we shall cite two: *Una* (*neque multorum annorum spatio divisa*) *ætas per divini spiritus viros, Æschylum, Sophoclem, Euripidem, illustravit Tragœdiam.* Not that this trinity of poets was *so* contemporary as brothers are; but they were contemporary as youthful uncles in relation to elderly nephews: Æschylus was viewed as a senior by Sophocles, Sophocles by Euripides; but all might by possibility have met together (what a constellation!) at the same table. Again, says Paterculus, *Quid ante Isocratem,*

[1] Paterculus, it must be remembered, was composing a peculiar form of history, and, therefore, under a peculiar law of composition. It was designed for a rapid survey of many ages within a very narrow compass, and unavoidably pitched its scale of abstraction very high. This justified a rhetorical, almost a poetic, form of expression; for in such a mode of writing, whether a writer seeks that effect or not, the abrupt and almost lyrical transitions, the startling leaps over vast gulfs of time and action, already have the effect of impassioned composition. Hence, by an instinct, he becomes rhetorical: and the natural character of his rhetoric, its pointed condensation, often makes him obscure at first sight. We, therefore, for the merely English reader, have a little expanded or at least brought out his meaning. But, for the Latin reader, who will enjoy his elliptical energy, we have sometimes added the original words.

quid post ejus auditores, clarum in oratoribus fuit? Nothing of any distinction in oratory *before* Isocrates, nothing *after* his personal audience. So confined was that orbit within which the perfection of Greek tragedy, within which the perfection of Greek eloquence, revolved. The same law, the same strong tendency, he insists, is illustrated in the different schools of Greek comedy, and again of Greek philosophy. Nay, it is more extensively illustrated amongst Greek artists in general: *Hoc idem evenisse grammaticis, plastis, pictoribus, scalptoribus, quisquis temporum institerit notis reperiet.*"

From Greece Paterculus translates the question to his own country in the following pointed manner: summing up the whole doctrine, and re-affirming it in a form almost startling and questionable by its rigour: "*Adeo arctatum angustiis temporum,*" so punctually concentrated was all merit within the closest limits of time, "*ut nemo memoria dignus alter ab altero videri nequiverint*": no man of any consideration but he might have had ocular cognisance of all others in his own field who attained to distinction. He adds: "*Neque hoc in Græcis quam in Romanis evenit magis.*"

His illustrations from the Roman Literature we do not mean to follow: one only, as requisite for our purpose, we cite:—"*Oratio, ac vis forensis, perfectumque prosæ eloquentiæ decus (pace P. Crassi et Gracchorum dixerim) ita universa sub principe operis sui erupit Tullio ut mirari neminem possis nisi aut ab illo visum aut qui illum viderit.*" This is said with epigrammatic point: the perfection of prose and the brilliancy of style as an artificial accomplishment, was so identified with Cicero's generation that no distinguished artist, none whom you could greatly admire, but might be called his contemporary: none so much his senior but Cicero might have seen *him*; none so much his junior but *he* might have seen Cicero. It is true that Crassus, in Cicero's infancy, and the two Gracchi, in the infancy of Crassus (neither of whom, therefore, could have been seen by Cicero), were memorably potent as orators,—in fact, for tragical results to themselves (which, by the way, was the universal destiny of great *Roman* orators); and nobody was more sensible of their majestic pretensions, merely as orators, than Cicero himself, who has accordingly made Crassus and

Antony predominant speakers in his splendid dialogues *De Oratore*. But they were merely demoniac powers, not artists. And, with respect to these early orators (as also with respect to some others, whose names we have omitted), Paterculus has made a special reservation. So that he had not at all overlooked the claims of these great men ; but he did not feel that any real exception to his general law was created by orators who were indeed wild organs of party rage or popular frenzy, but who wilfully disdained to connect themselves with the refinements of literature. Such orators did not regard themselves as intellectual, but as political, powers. Confining himself to oratory, and to the perfection of prose composition, written or spoken, in the sense of great literary accomplishments, beginning in natural power but perfected by art, Paterculus stands to his assertion that this mode of human genius had so crowded its development within the brief circuit of Cicero's life (threescore years and three) as that the total series of Roman Orators formed a sort of circle, centering in that supreme orator's person, such as in modern times we might call an electrical circle,—each link of the chain having been either electrified by Cicero or having elecrified *him*. Seneca, with great modesty, repeats the very same assertion in other words : "*Quicquid Romana facundia habuit quod insolenti Græciæ aut opponat aut præferat circa Ciceronem efflоruit.*" A most ingenuous and self-forgetting homage in him ; for a nobler master of thinking than himself Paganism has not to show, nor, when the cant of criticism has done its worst, a more brilliant master of composition. And, were his rule construed literally, it would exclude the two Plinys, the two Senecas, Tacitus, Quintilian, and others, from the matricula of Roman eloquence. Not one of these men could have seen Cicero ; all were divided by more than one generation ; and yet, most unquestionably, though all were too reasonable to have fancied themselves any match for the almighty orator in public speaking, not one but was an equally accomplished artist in written composition, and under a law of artificial style far more difficult to manage.

However, with the proper allowances for too unmodified a form of expression, we must allow that the singular phenom-

enon first noticed by Paterculus, as connecting itself with the manifestations of human genius, is sufficiently established by so much of human history as even he had witnessed. For, if it should be alleged that political changes accounted for the extinction of oral eloquence concurrently with the death of Cicero, still there are cases more than enough even in the poetry of both Greece and Rome, to say nothing of the arts, which bear out the general fact of human genius coming forward by insulated groups and clusters ; or, if Pagan ages had left that point doubtful, we have since witnessed Christian repetitions of the truth on the very widest scale. The Italian age of Leo X, in the fifteenth century, the French age of Louis XIV, in the seventeenth century, the German age commencing with Kant, Wieland, Goethe, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, all illustrate the tendency to these intermitting paroxysms of intellectual energy. The lightning and the storm seem to have made the circuit of the whole European heavens, to have formed vortices successively in every civilized land, and to have discharged themselves by turns from every quarter of the atmosphere. In our own country there have been three such gatherings of intellectual power : 1*st*, The age of Shakspere, Spenser, and the great school of dramatists that were already dying out in the latter days of Ben Jonson (1636), and were finally extinguished by the great civil commotions beginning in 1642 ; 2*dly*, The age of Queen Anne and George I. ; 3*dly*, The age commencing with Cowper, partially roused perhaps by the American War, and afterwards so powerfully stimulated (as was the corresponding era of Kant and Wieland) by the French Revolution. This last volcanic eruption of the British genius has displayed enormous power and splendour. Let malice and the base detraction of contemporary jealousy say what it will, greater originality of genius, more expansive variety of talent, never was exhibited than in our own country since the year 1793. Every mode of excellence, except only dramatic excellence (in which we have nothing modern to place by the side of Schiller's *Wallenstein*), has been revealed in dazzling lustre. And he that denies it, may he be suffocated by his own bilious envy !

But the point upon which we wish to fix the reader's

attention in citing this interesting observation of the Roman officer, and the reason for which we have cited it at all, is not so much for the mere fact of these spring-tides occurring in the manifestations of human genius, intermitting pulses (so to speak) in human energies, as the psychological peculiarity which seems to affect the cycle of their recurrences. Paterculus occupies himself chiefly with the *causes* of such phenomena ; and one main cause he suggests as lying in the emulation which possesses men when once a specific direction has been impressed upon the public competitions. This no doubt is one of the causes. But a more powerful cause perhaps lies in a principle of union than in any principle of division amongst men,—viz. in the principle of sympathy. The great Italian painters, for instance, were doubtless evoked in such crowds by the action of this principle. To hear the buzz of idolizing admiration settling for years upon particular works of art and artists kindles something better than merely the ambition and rivalship of men ; it kindles feelings happier and more favourable to excellence, viz. genial love and comprehension of the qualities fitted to stir so profound and lasting an emotion. This contagion of sympathy runs electrically through society, searches high and low for congenial powers, and suffers none to lurk unknown to the possessor. A vortex is created which draws into its suction whatever is liable to a similar action. But, not to linger upon this question of causes, what we wish to place under the reader's eye is rather the peculiar type which belongs to these revolutions of national intellect, according to the place which each occupies in the order of succession. Possibly it would seem an over-refinement if we were to suggest that the odd terms in the series indicate creative energies, and the even terms reflective energies ; and we are far enough from affecting the honours of any puerile hypothesis. But, in a general way, it seems plausible and reasonable that there will be alternating successions of power in the first place, and next of reaction upon that power from the reflective faculties. It does seem natural that first of all should blossom the energies of creative power, and in the next era of the literature, when the consciousness has been brightened to its own agencies, will be likely to come forward

the re-agencies of the national mind on what it has created. The period of meditation will succeed to the period of production. Or, if the energies of creation are again partially awake, finding themselves forestalled as regards the grander passions, they will be likely to settle upon the feebler elements of manners. Social differences will now fix the attention by way of substitute for the bolder differences of nature. Should a third period, after the swing of the pendulum through an arch of centuries, succeed for the manifestation of the national genius, it is possible that the long interval since the inaugural era of creative art will have so changed all the elements of society and the aspects of life as to restore the mind to much of its infant freedom ; it may no longer feel the captivity of an imitative spirit in dealing with the very same class of creations as exercised its earliest powers. The original national genius may now come forward in perfectly new forms without the sense of oppression from inimitable models. The hoar of ages may have withdrawn some of these models from active competition. And thus it may not be impossible that oscillations between the creative and reflective energies of the mind might go on through a cycle of many ages.

In our own literature we see this scheme of oscillations illustrated. In the Shakspere period we see the fulness of life and the enormity of power throwing up a tropical exuberance of vegetation. A century afterwards we see a generation of men lavishly endowed with genius, but partly degraded by the injurious training of a most profligate era growing out of great revolutionary convulsions, and partly lowered in the tone of their aspirations by a despair of rivalling the great creations of their predecessors. We see them universally acquiescing in humbler modes of ambition ; showing sometimes a corresponding merit to that of their greatest forefathers, but merit (if sometimes equal) yet equal upon a lower scale. *Thirdly*, In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries we see a new birth of original genius, of which it is not lawful to affirm any absolute inferiority even by comparison with the Shaksperian age of Titans. For whatsoever is strictly and thoroughly original, being *sui generis*, cannot be better or worse than any other model of excellence which is also original. One animal structure

compared with another of a different class is equally good and perfect. One valley which is no copy of another, but has a separate and peculiar beauty, cannot be compared for any purpose of disadvantage with another. One poem which is composed upon a law of its own, and has a characteristic or separate beauty of its own, cannot be inferior to any other poem whatsoever. The class, the order, may be inferior; the scale may be a lower one; but the individual work, the degree of merit marked upon the scale must be equal, if only the poem is equally original. In all such cases understand, ye miserable snarlers at contemporary merit, that the puerile *goût de comparaison* (as La Bruyère calls it) is out of place; universally you cannot affirm any *imparity* where the ground is preoccupied by *disparity*. Where there is no parity of principle there is no basis for comparison.

Now, passing, with the benefit of these explanations, to Grecian Literature, we may observe that there were in that field of human intellect no more than two developments of power from first to last. And, perhaps, the unlearned reader (for it is to the praise and honour of a powerful journal that it has the unlearned equally with the learned amongst its readers) will thank us for here giving him, in a very few words, such an account of the Grecian Literature in its periods of manifestation, and in the relations existing between these periods, that he shall not easily forget them.

There were, in illustration of the Roman aide-de-camp's[1]

[1] "*The Roman aide-de-camp's*":—Excuse, reader, this modern phrase: by what other is it possible to express the relation to Tiberius, and the military office about his person, which Paterculus held on the German frontier? In the 104th chapter of his second book he says—"*Hoc tempus me, functum ante tribunatu castrorum, Tib. Cæsaris militem fecit*"; which in our version is—"This epoch placed me, who had previously discharged the duties of camp-marshal, upon the staff of Cæsar." And he goes on to say that, having been made a brigadier-general of cavalry (*alæ præfectus*) under a commission which dated from the very day of Cæsar's adoption into the Imperial house and the prospect of succession,—so that the two acts of grace ran concurrently,—thenceforwards "per annos continuos IX præfectus aut legatus, spectator, et pro captu mediocritatis meæ adjutor, fui"; or, as I beg to translate, "through a period of nine consecutive years from this date, I acted either as military lieutenant to Cæsar, or as ministerial secretary" (such we hold to be the true virtual equivalent of *præfectus*;

doctrine, two groups or clusters of Grecian wits, two depositions or stratifications of the national genius ; and these were about a century apart. What makes them specially rememberable is the fact that each of these brilliant clusters had gathered separately about that man as central pivot who, even apart from this relation to the literature, was otherwise the leading spirit of his age. It is important for our purpose —it will be interesting, even without that purpose, for the reader—to notice the distinguishing character or marks by which the two clusters are separately recognised ; the marks both personal and chronological. As to the personal distinctions, we have said that in each case severally the two men who offered the nucleus to the gathering happened to be otherwise the most eminent and splendid men of the period. Who were they? The one was PERICLES, the other was ALEXANDER OF MACEDON. Except Themistocles, who may be ranked as senior to Pericles by just one generation (or thirty-three years),[1] in the whole deduction of Grecian annals

i.e., speaking fully, of *præfectus prætorio*), "acting simultaneously as inspector of the public works" (bridges and vast fortifications on the north-east German frontier), "and (to the best capacity of my slender faculties) as his personal aide-de-camp." Possibly the reader may choose to give a less confined or professional meaning to the word *adjutor*. But, in apology, we must suggest two cautions to him : 1st, That elsewhere Paterculus does certainly apply the term as a military designation, bearing a known technical meaning ; and, 2d, That this word *adjutor*, in other non-military uses, as for instance on the stage, had none *but* a technical meaning.

[1] This is too much to allow for a generation in those days, when the average duration of life was much less than at present ; but, as an exceedingly convenient allowance (*since thrice* $33\frac{1}{3}$ *is just equal to a century*) it may be allowedly used in all cases not directly bearing on technical questions of civil economy. Meantime, as we love to suppose ourselves in all cases as speaking *virginibus puerisque*,—who, though reading no man's paper throughout, may yet often read a page or a paragraph of every man's,—we, for the chance of catching their eye in a case where they may really gain in two minutes an ineradicable conspectus of the Greek Literature (and for the sake of ignorant people universally, whose interests we hold sacred), add a brief explanation of what is meant by *a generation*. Is it meant or imagined that in so narrow a compass as 33 years + 4 months the whole population of a city, or a people, could have died off? By no means : not under the lowest value of human life. What is meant is—that a number *equal* to the whole population will have died : not X, the actual

no other public man, statesman, captain-general, administrator of the national resources, can be mentioned as approaching to these two men in splendour of reputation, or even in real merit. Pisistratus was too far back; Alcibiades, who might (chronologically speaking) have been the son of Pericles, was too unsteady and (according to Mr. Coleridge's coinage) "unreliable," or, perhaps in more correct English, too "*unrelyuponable*."

Thus far our purpose prospers. No man can pretend to forget two such centres as Pericles for the elder group, or Alexander of Macedon (the "strong he-goat" of Jewish prophecy) for the junior. Round these two *foci*, in two different but adjacent centuries, gathered the total starry heavens—the galaxy, the Pantheon—of Grecian intellect. All that Greece produced of awful solemnity in her tragic stage, of riotous mirth and fancy in her comic stage, of power in her eloquence, of wisdom in her philosophy; all that has since tingled in the ears of twenty-four centuries of her prosperity in the arts, her sculpture, her architecture, her painting, her music; everything, in short, excepting only her higher mathematics, which waited for a further development which required the incubation of the musing intellect for yet another century, revolved like two neighbouring planetary systems about these two solar orbs. Two mighty vortices, Pericles and Alexander the Great, drew into strong eddies about themselves all the glory and the pomp of Greek literature, Greek eloquence, Greek wisdom, Greek art. Next,

population, but a number equal to X. Suppose the population of Paris 900,000. Then, in the time allowed for one generation, 900,000 will have died: but then, to make up that number, there will be 300,000 furnished, not by the people now existing, but by the people who *will be born* in the course of the 33 years. And thus the balloting for death falls only upon two out of three whom at first sight it appears to hit. It falls not exclusively upon X, but upon X + Y: this latter quantity Y being a quantity flowing concurrently with the lapse of the generation. Obvious as this explanation is, and almost childish, to every man who has even a tincture of political arithmetic, it is so far from being generally obvious that, out of every thousand who will be interested in learning the earliest revolutions of literature, there will not be as many as ten who will know, even conjecturally, what is meant by a generation. Besides infinite other blunders and equivocations, many use an *age* and *a generation* as synonymous, whilst by *siècle* the French *uniformly* mean a *century*.

that we may still more severely search the relations in all points between the two systems, let us assign the chronological *locus* of each, because that will furnish another element towards the exact distribution of the chart representing the motion and the oscillations of human genius. Pericles had a very long administration. He was Prime Minister of Athens for upwards of one entire generation. He died in the year 429 before Christ, and in a very early stage of that great Peloponnesian War which was the one sole intestine war for Greece, affecting *every* nook and angle in the land. Now, in this long public life of Pericles, we are at liberty to fix on *any* year as his chronological *locus*. On good reasons, not called for in this place, we fix on the year 444 before Christ. This is too remarkable to be forgotten. *Four, four, four*, what at some games of cards is called a "*prial*" (we presume, by an elision of the first vowel *a*, for *parial*), forms an era which no man can forget. It was the fifteenth year before the death of Pericles, and not far from the bisecting year of his political life. Now, passing to the other system, the *locus* of Alexander is quite as remarkable, as little liable to be forgotten when once indicated, and more easily determined, because selected from a narrower range of choice. The exact chronological *locus* of Alexander the Great is 333 years before Christ. Everybody knows how brief was the career of this great man: it terminated in the year 320 before Christ. But the *annus mirabilis* of his public life, the most effective and productive year throughout his oriental anabasis, was the year 333 before Christ. Here we have another "*prial*," a prial of threes, for the *locus* of Alexander, *if properly corrected*.

Thus far the elements are settled, the chronological longitude and latitude of the two great planetary systems into which the Greek Literature breaks up and distributes itself: 444 and 333 are the two central years for the two systems; allowing, therefore, an interspace of 111 years between the *foci* of each. It is thought by some people that all those stars which you see glittering so restlessly on a keen frosty night in a high latitude, and which seem to have been sown broadcast with as much carelessness as grain lies on a threshing-floor,—here showing vast zaarrahs

of desert blue sky, there again lying close and to some eyes presenting

"The beauteous semblance of a flock at rest,"—

are in fact all gathered into zones or *strata*; that our own wicked little earth (with the whole of our peculiar solar system) is a part of such a zone, and that all this perfect geometry of the heavens, these radii in the mighty wheel, would become apparent if we, the spectators, could but survey it from the true centre,—which centre may be far too distant for any vision of man, naked or armed, to reach. However that may be, it is most instructive to see how many apparent scenes of confusion break up into orderly arrangement when you are able to apply an *a priori* principle of organization to their seeming chaos. The two vortices of the Greek Literature are now separated; the chronological *loci* of their centres are settled. And next we request the reader thoughtfully to consider who *they* are of whom the elder system is composed.

In the centre, as we have already explained, is Pericles, the great practical statesman, and that orator of whom (amongst so many that vibrated thunderbolts) it was said peculiarly that he thundered and lightened as if he held this Jovian attribute by some individual title. We spare you Milton's magnificent description from the *Paradise Regained* of such an orator "wielding at will that fierce democracy," partly because the closing line in its reference "to *Macedon* and Artaxerxes' throne," too much points the homage to Demosthenes, but still more because by too trivial a repetition of splendid passages a serious injury is done to great poets.[1] Passages of great musical effect, metrical

[1] The passage, however, may be quoted here, if only for the recovery of the exact original form of one of the words in Milton's own text:—

"Thence to the famous Orators repair,
Those ancient whose resistless eloquence
Wielded at will that fierce democraty,
Shook the Arsenal, and fulmined over Greece
To Macedon and Artaxerxes' throne."

P. R., iv. 267-271.

De Quincey's insinuated doubt as to the merits of Demosthenes is characteristic.—M.

bravuras, are absolutely vulgarized by too perpetual a parroting; and the care of Augustus Cæsar *ne nomen suum obsolefieret*,[1] that the majesty of his name should not be vulgarized by bad poets, is more seriously needed in our days on behalf of great poets, to protect them from trivial or too parrot-like a citation.

Passing onwards from Pericles, you find that all the rest in *his* system were men in the highest sense creative, absolutely setting the very first examples, each in his peculiar walk of composition; themselves without previous models, and yet destined every man of them to become models for all after-generations; themselves without fathers or mothers, and yet having all posterity for their children. First come the three men *divini spiritus*, under a heavenly afflatus, Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, the creators of Tragedy out of a village mummery; next comes Aristophanes, who breathed the breath of life into Comedy; then comes the great philosopher, Anaxagoras, who first theorised successfully upon man and the world. Next come, whether great or not, the still more *famous* philosophers, Socrates, Plato, Xenophon; then comes, leaning upon Pericles, as sometimes Pericles leaned upon *him*, the divine artist, Phidias[2]; and

[1] The oddest feature in so odd a business was that Augustus committed this castigation of bad poets to the police; but whence the police were to draw the skill for distinguishing between good poets and bad is not explained. The poets must have found their weak minds somewhat astonished by the sentences of these reviewers—sitting like our Justices in Quarter Sessions, and deciding perhaps very much in the same terms; treating an Ode, if it were too martial, as a breach of the peace; directing an Epic poet to find security for his good behaviour during the next two years; and, for the writers of Epithalamia on imperial marriages, ordering them "to be privately whipped and discharged." The whole affair is the more singular as coming from one who carried his *civilitas*, or show of popular manners, even to affectation. Power, without the invidious exterior of power, was the object of his life. Ovid seems to have noticed his inconsistency in this instance by reminding him that even Jupiter did not disdain to furnish a theme for panegyric.

[2] "*Phidias*":—That he was as much of a creative power as the rest of his great contemporaries, that he did not merely take up or pursue a career already opened by others, is pretty clear from the state of Athens, and of the forty marble quarries which he began to lay under contribution. The quarries were previously unopened; the city was as yet without architectural splendour.

behind this immortal man walk Herodotus and Thucydides. What a procession to Eleusis would these men have formed! what a frieze, if some great artist could arrange it as dramatically as Chaucer has arranged the *Pilgrimage to Canterbury*!

It will be granted that this is unmasking a pretty strong battery of great guns for the Athens of Pericles. Now, let us step on a hundred years forward. We are now within hail of Alexander; and a brilliant consistory of Grecian men *that* is by which *he* is surrounded. There are now exquisite masters of the more refined comedy; there are, again, great philosophers, for all the great schools are represented by able successors; and, above all others, there is the one philosopher who played with men's minds (according to Lord Bacon's comparison) as freely as ever his princely pupil with their persons—there is Aristotle. There are great orators, and, above all others, there is that orator whom succeeding generations (wisely or not) have adopted as the representative name for what is conceivable in oratorical perfection—there is Demosthenes. Aristotle and Demosthenes are in themselves bulwarks of power; many hosts lie in those two names. For artists, again, to range against Phidias, there is Lysippus the sculptor, and there is Apelles the painter; for great captains and masters of strategic art, there is Alexander himself, with a glittering *cortége* of general officers, well qualified to wear the crowns which they will win, and to head the dynasties which they will found. Historians there are now, as in that former age; and, upon the whole, it cannot be denied that the "turn-out" is showy and imposing.

Before coming to that point,—that is, before comparing the second "deposit" (geologically speaking) of Grecian genius with the first,—let us consider what it was (if anything) that connected them. Here, reader, we would wish to put a question. Saving your presence, Did you ever see what is called a dumb-bell? We have; and know it by more painful evidence than that of sight.

You, therefore, O reader! if personally cognisant of dumb-bells, we will remind,—if not, we will inform,—that it is a cylindrical bar of iron or lead issuing at each end in a globe

of the same metal, and usually it is sheathed in green baize; but, perfidiously so, if that covering is meant to deny or to conceal the fact of those heart-rending thumps which it inflicts upon one's too confiding fingers every third *ictus*. By the way, we have a vague remembrance that the late Mr. Thurtell, the same who was generally censured for murdering the late Mr. Weare, once in a dark lobby attempted to murder a friend by means of a dumb-bell; in which he showed his judgment,—we mean in his choice of tools,—for otherwise, in attempting to murder his friend, he was to blame.[1] Now, reader, it is under this image of the dumb-bell we couch an allegory. Those globes at each end are the two systems or separate clusters of Greek Literature; and that cylinder which connects them is the long man that ran into each system, binding the two together. Who was that? It was Isocrates. *Great* we cannot call him in conscience; and, therefore, by way of compromise, we call him *long*,—which, in one sense, he certainly was; for he lived through four-and-twenty Olympiads, each containing four solar years. He narrowly escaped being a hundred years old; and, though that did not carry him from centre to centre, yet, as each system might be supposed to protend a radius each way of twenty years, he had, in fact, a full personal cognisance (and pretty equally) of the two systems, remote as they were, which composed the total world of Grecian Genius. Two circumstances have made this man interesting to all posterity; so that people the most remote and different in character (Cicero, for instance, and Milton) have taken a delight in his memory. One is, that the school of rhetoric in Athens, which did not finally go down till the reign of Justinian, and therefore lasted above 940 years without interruption, began with *him*. He was, says Cicero, *De Orat.*, "pater eloquentiæ"; and elsewhere he calls him "communis magister oratorum." True, he never practised himself, for which he had two reasons: "My lungs," he tells us himself, "are weak"; and, secondly, "I am naturally, as well as upon

[1] John Thurtell, hanged at Hertford in January 1824 for the murder of Mr. William Weare. De Quincey recurs to the story of this once famous murder more at large, and to the particular of the dumb-bell, in his *Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts*.—M.

principle, a coward." There he was right. A man would never have seen twenty-four Olympiads who had gone about brawling and giving "jaw" as Demosthenes and Cicero did. You see what *they* made of it. The other feature of interest in this long man is precisely that fact, viz. that he *was* long. Everybody looks with kindness upon the snowy-headed man who saw the young prince Alexander of Macedon within four years of his starting for Persia, and personally knew most of those that gave lustre to the levees of Pericles. Accordingly, it is for this quality of length that Milton honours him with a touching memorial; for Isocrates was "that old man eloquent" of Milton's sonnet whom the battle of Chæronea, "fatal to liberty, killed with report."[1] This battle, by which Philip overthrew the last struggles of dying independence in Greece, occurred in the year 338 before Christ. Philip was himself assassinated two years later. Consequently, had Isocrates pulled out, like caoutchouc or Indian rubber, a little longer, he might have seen the silver shields, or Macedonian life-guards, embarking for Persia. In less than five years from that same battle, "fatal to liberty," Alexander was taking fatal liberties with Persia, and "tickling the catastrophe" of Darius. There were just seventy good years between the two expeditions,—the Persian anabasis of Cyrus the younger, and the Persian anabasis of Alexander; but Isocrates knew personally many officers and *savans*[2] in both.

[1] "As that dishonest victory
At Chæronea, fatal to liberty,
Killed with report that old man eloquent."
MILTON—Sonnet X.—M.

[2] "Officers and *savans*":—Ctesias held the latter character, Xenophon united both, in the earlier expedition. These were friends of Isocrates. In the latter expedition, the difficulty would have been to find the man, whether officer or *savant*, who was *not* the friend of Isocrates. Old age such as his was a very rare thing in Greece; a fact which is evident from a Greek work surviving on the subject of Macrobiotics: few cases occur beyond seventy. This accident, therefore, of longevity in Isocrates must have made him already one of the standing lions in Athens for the last twenty-six years of his life; while, for the last seventy, his professorship of rhetoric must have brought him into connexion with every great family in Greece. One thing puzzles us,—what he did with his money: for he must have made a great deal. He had two prices; for he charged high to those

Others, beside Cicero and Milton, have taken a deep interest in Isocrates,—and, for the very circumstance we have been noticing, his *length*, combined with the accident of position which made that length effective in connecting the twofold literature of Greece. Had he been "*long*" in any other situation than just in that dreary desert between the oasis of Pericles and the oasis of Alexander, what good would that have done us? "A wounded snake" or an Alexandrine verse, that "drags its slow length along," would have been as useful. But he, feeling himself wanted, laid his length down like a railroad exactly where he could be useful — with his positive pole towards Pericles and his negative pole towards Alexander. Even Gibbon—even the frosty Gibbon—condescends to be pleased with this seasonable application of his two termini: "Our sense," says he, in his 40th chapter, "of the dignity of human nature is exalted [1] by the simple recollection that Isocrates was the companion of Plato and Xenophon,—that he assisted, perhaps

who could afford it; and why not? people are not to learn the art of prating for nothing, Yet, being a teetotaller and a coward, how could he spend his money? That question is vexatious. However, this one possibility in the long man's life will for ever make him interesting: he might have seen, and it is even probable that he *did* see Xenophon *dis*mount from some horse which he had stolen at Trebizond on his return from the Cyrus expedition; and he might also have seen Alexander mount for Chæronea. Alexander was present at that battle, and personally joined in a charge of cavalry. It is not impossible that he may have ridden Bucephalus.

[1] "*Is exalted*": —The logic of Gibbon may seem rather cloudy. Why should it exalt our sense of human dignity that Isocrates was the youthful companion of Plato or Euripides and the aged companion of Demosthenes? It ought, therefore, to be mentioned that, in the sentence preceding, he had spoken of Athens as a city that "condensed within the period of a single life the genius of ages and millions." The condensation is the measure of the dignity; and Isocrates, as the "single life" alluded to, is the measure of the condensation. That is the logic. By the way, Gibbon ought always to be cited by the *chapter*. The page and volume of course evanesce with many forms of publication, whilst the chapter is *always* available; and, in the commonest form of twelve volumes, becomes useful in a second function, as a guide to the particular volume; for six chapters, with hardly any exception (*if* any) are thrown into each volume. Consequently, the 40th chapter, standing in the seventh series of sixes, indicates the seventh volume.

with the historian Thucydides, at the first representations of the Œdipus of Sophocles and the Iphigenia of Euripides." So far in relation to the upper terminus of the long man; next, with reference to the lower terminus, Gibbon goes on: "And that his pupils, Æschines and Demosthenes, contended for the *crown* of patriotism in the presence of Aristotle, the master of Theophrastus, who taught at Athens with the founders of the Stoic and Epicurean sects."

Now then, reader, you have arrived at that station from which you overlook the whole of Greek Literature, as a few explanations will soon convince you. Where is Homer, where is Hesiod? you ask; where is Pindar? Homer and Hesiod lived a thousand years B.C., or, by the lowest computations, near nine hundred. For anything that we know, they may have lived with Tubal Cain. At all events, they belong to no power or agency that set in motion the age of Pericles, or that operated on that age. Pindar, again, was a solitary emanation of some unknown influences at Thebes, more than five hundred years before Christ. He may be referred to the same era as Pythagoras. These are all that can be cited *before* Pericles.

Next, for the ages *after* Alexander, it is certain that Greece proper was so much broken in spirit by the loss of her *autonomy* dating from that era as never again to have rallied sufficiently to produce a single man of genius,—not one solitary writer who acted as a power upon the national mind. Callimachus was nobody, and not decidedly Grecian. Theocritus, a man of real genius in a limited way, is a Grecian in that sense only according to which an Anglo-American is an Englishman. Besides that, one swallow does not make a summer. Of any other writers, above all others of Menander, apparently a man of divine genius, we possess only a few wrecks; and of Anacreon, who must have been a poet of original power, we do not certainly know that we have even any wrecks. Of those which pass under his name, not merely the authorship, but the era, is very questionable indeed. Plutarch and Lucian, the unlearned reader must understand, both belong to *post*-Christian ages. And, for all the Greek emigrants who may have written histories, such as we now value for their matter more than for

their execution, one and all they belong too much to Roman civilisation that we should ever think of connecting them with native Greek literature.[1] Polybius in the days of the second Scipio, Dion Cassius and Appian in the acme of Roman civility, are no more Grecian authors because they wrote in Greek than the Emperor Marcus Antoninus, or Julian, were other than Romans because, from monstrous coxcombry, they chose to write in Greek their barren memoranda. As well might Gibbon be thought not an Englishman, or Leibnitz not a German, because the former, in composing the first draft of his essay on literature, and the latter in composing his *Theodicée*, used the French language. The motive in all these cases was analogous: amongst the Greek writers it was the affectation of reaching a particular body of educated men, a learned class, to the exclusion of the uninstructed multitude. With the affectors of French the wish was to reach a particular body of thinkers, with whose feelings they had a special sympathy from

[1] Excepting fragmentary writers,—Sappho and Simonides, and the contributors to the Greek Anthologies (which, however, next after the scenic literature, offer the most interesting expressions of Greek household feeling),—we are not aware of having omitted in this rapid review any one name that could be fancied to be a weighty name, excepting that of Lycophron. Of him we will say a word or two:—The work by which he is known is a monologue or dramatic scene from the mouth of one single speaker; this speaker is Cassandra the prophetic daughter of Priam. In about 1500 Iambic lines (the average length of a Greek tragedy) she pours forth a dark prophecy with respect to all the heroes engaged in the Trojan War, typifying their various unhappy catastrophes by symbolic images which should naturally be intelligible enough to us who know their several histories, but which (from the particular selection of accidents or circumstances used for the designation of the persons) read like riddles without the aid of a commentator. This prophetic gloom, and the impassioned character of the many woes arising notoriously to the conquerors as well as the conquered in the sequel of the memorable war, give a colouring of dark power to the Cassandra of Lycophron. Else we confess to the fact of not having been much impressed by the poem. We read it in the year 1809, having been told that it was the most difficult book in the Greek language. This is the popular impression, but a very false one. It is not difficult at all as respects the language (allowing for a few peculiar Lycophrontic words); the difficulty lies in the allusions, which are *intentionally* obscure. Lycophron did as we now do in eclipses—he *smoked* the glass through which he gazed.

personal habituation of their society, and to whose prejudices, literary or philosophic, they had adapted their train of argument.

No; the Greek Literature ends at the point we have fixed, viz. with the era of Alexander. No power, no heart-subduing agency, was ever again incarnated in any book, system of philosophy, or other model of creative energy, growing upon Grecian soil or from Grecian roots. Creation was extinct; the volcano was burnt out. What books appeared at scattered intervals during the three centuries still remaining before the Christian era lie under a reproach, pretty general, which perhaps has not been perceived. From the titles and passing notices of their objects, or mode of dealing with their objects, such as we derive from Cicero and many others, it is evident that they were merely professional books, text-books for lectures addressed to students, or polemic works addressed to competitors. Chairs of Rhetoric and Philosophy had now been founded in Athens. A great University, the resort of students from all nations, was established, and, in a sense sufficient to insure the perpetual succession of these corporate bodies, was endowed. Books, therefore, and labouring with the same two opposite defects as are unjustly charged upon the schoolmen of the middle ages,—viz. dulness from absolute monotony, and visionariness from the aerial texture of the speculations,—continued to be written in discharge of professional obligations, or in pursuit of professional interest. The *summum bonum* was discussed until it had become the capital affliction of human patience, the *summum malum* of human life. Beyond these there was no literature; and these products of dreaming indolence, which terminated in making the very name of Greek philosopher and Greek rhetorician a jest and byword amongst the manlier Romans, no more constituted a literature than a succession of academic studies from the pupils of a royal institution can constitute a school of fine art.

Here, therefore, at this era of Alexander, 333 B.C.,—when every Greek patriot had reason to say of his native literature "*Venimus ad summum fortunæ*," We have seen the best of our days,—we must look for the Greek ideas of style, and the Greek theories of composition, in the uttermost

development that either *could* have received. In the earlier system of Greek intellectual strength, in the era of Pericles, the powers of style would be most comprehensively exercised. In the second system, in the era of Alexander, the light of conscious recognition and direct examination would be most effectually applied. The first age furnished the power; the second furnished the science. The first brought the concrete model, the second brought the abstracting skill; and between them the whole compass of Greek speculation upon this point would be brought to a focus. Such being the state of preparation, what was the result?

Part IV

"*Such being the state of preparation, what was the result?*" These words concluded our last essay. There had been two manifestations or bright epiphanies of the Grecian intellect, revelations in two separate forms: the first having gathered about Pericles in the year 444 B.C., the second about Alexander the Great in 333 B.C.; the first being a pure literature of creative power, the second in a great measure of reflective power; the first fitted to call out the differences of style, the second to observe, classify, and discuss them. Under these circumstances of favourable preparation, what had been the result? Where style exists in strong colouring as a practice or art, we reasonably expect that style should soon follow as a theory, as a science explaining that art, tracing its varieties, and teaching its rules. To use ancient distinctions, where the "*rhetorica utens*" has been cultivated with eminent success (as in early Greece it had) it is but natural to expect many consequent attempts at a "*rhetorica docens*." And especially it is natural to do so in a case where the theorizing intellect had been powerfully awakened. What, therefore, we ask again, had been in fact the result?

We must acknowledge that it had fallen far below the reasonable standard of our expectations. Greece, it is true, produced a long series of works on rhetoric, many of which, though not easily met with,[1] survive to this day; and one

[1] "*Not easily met with*":—From Germany we have seen reprints of some eight or nine; but once only, so far as our bibliography

which stands first in order of time, viz. the great work of Aristotle, is of such distinguished merit that some eminent moderns have not scrupled to rank it as the very foremost legacy in point of psychological knowledge which Pagan Literature has bequeathed to us. Without entering upon so large a comparison as that, we readily admit the commanding talent which this work displays. But it is under an equivocal use of the word "rhetoric" that the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle could ever have been classed with books treating of style. There is in fact a complex distinction to which the word Rhetoric is liable. 1st, it means the *rhetorica utens*, as when we praise the rhetoric of Seneca or Sir Thomas Browne, not meaning anything which they taught, but something which they practised,—not a doctrine which they delivered, but a machinery of composition which they employed. 2dly, it means the *rhetorica docens*, as when we praise the Rhetoric of Aristotle or Hermogenes, writers far enough from being rhetorical by their own style of writing, but writers who professedly taught others to be rhetorical. 3dly, the *rhetorica utens* itself is subdivided into two meanings, so wide apart that they have very little bearing on each other: one being applied to the art of persuasion, the dexterous use of plausible topics for recommending any opinion whatever to the favour of an audience (this is the Grecian sense universally); the other being applied to the art of composition, the art of treating any subject ornamentally, gracefully, affectingly. There is another use of the word rhetoric distinct from all these, and hitherto, we believe, not consciously noticed; of which at some other time.[1]

Now, this last subdivision of the word rhetoric, viz. "Rhetoric considered as a practising art, *rhetorica utens*,"—which is the sense exclusively indicated by our modern use of the term,—is not at all concerned in the Rhetoric of

extends, were the whole body published collectively. This was at the Aldine press in Venice more than three centuries ago. Such an interval, and so solitary a publication, sufficiently explain the non-familiarity of modern scholars with this section of Greek Literature. [The most complete account of the Rhetoric of the Greeks and Romans even to this day is a product of German scholarship: viz. Volkmann's *Rhetorik der Griechen und Römer*, published in 1872.—M.]

[1] See *ante*, pp. 82-85 and 92-93, footnotes.—M.

Aristotle. It is rhetoric as a mode of moral suasion, as a technical system for obtaining a readiness in giving to the false a colouring of plausibility, to the doubtful a colouring of probability, or in giving to the true, when it happens to be obscure, the benefit of a convincing exposition,—this it is which Aristotle undertakes to teach, and not at all the art of ornamental composition. In fact, it is the whole body of public *extempore* speakers whom he addresses, not the body of deliberate writers in any section whatever. And, therefore, whilst conceding readily all the honour which is claimed for that great man's Rhetoric, by this one distinction as to what it was that he meant by Rhetoric, we evade at once all necessity for modifying our general proposition,—viz. that style in our modern sense, as a theory of composition, as an art of constructing sentences and weaving them into coherent wholes, was not effectually cultivated amongst the Greeks. It was not so well understood, nor so distinctly contemplated in the light of a separate accomplishment, as afterwards among the Romans. And we repeat that this result from circumstances *prima facie* so favourable to the very opposite result is highly remarkable. It is *so* remarkable that we shall beg permission to linger a little upon those features in the Greek Literature which most of all might seem to have warranted our expecting from Greece the very consummation of this delicate art. For these same features, which would separately have justified that expectation, may happen, when taken in combination with others, to account for its disappointment.

There is, then, amongst the earliest phenomena of the Greek Literature, and during its very inaugural period, one which of itself and singly furnishes a presumption for expecting an exquisite investigation of style. It lies in the fact that two out of the three great tragic poets carried his own characteristic quality of style to a morbid excess,—to such an excess as should force itself, and in fact *did* force itself, into popular notice. Had these poets all alike exhibited that sustained and equable tenor of tragic style which we find in Sophocles, it is not probable that the vulgar attention would have been fixed by its character. Where a standard of splendour is much raised, provided all parts are simul-

taneously raised on the same uniform scale, we know by repeated experience in many modes of display, whether in dress, in architecture, in the embellishment of rooms, &c., that this raising of the standard is not perceived with much vivacity, and that the feelings of the spectator are soon reconciled to alterations that are harmonized. It is always by some want of uniformity, some defect in following out the scale, that we become roused to conscious observation of the difference between this and our former standards. We exaggerate these differences in such a case as much as we undervalue them in a case where all is symmetrical. We might expect, therefore, beforehand, that the opposite characteristics as to style of Æschylus and Euripides would force themselves upon the notice of the Athenian populace; and, in fact, we learn from the Greek scholiasts on these poets that this effect did really follow. These scholiasts, indeed, belong to a later age. But we know by traditions which they have preserved, and we know from Aristotle himself, the immediate successor of the great tragic poets (indirectly we know also from the stormy ridicule of Aristophanes, who may be viewed as contemporary with those poets), that Æschylus was notorious to a proverb amongst the very mob for the stateliness, pomp, and towering character of his diction, whilst Euripides was equally notorious not merely for a diction in a lower key, more household, more natural, less elaborate, but also for cultivating such a diction by study and deliberate preference. Having such great models of contrasting style to begin with, having the attention converged upon these differences by the furious merriment of Aristophanes, less than a Grecian wit would have felt a challenge in all this to the investigation of style, as a great organ of difference between man and man, between poet and poet.

But there was a more enduring reason in the circumstances of Greece for entitling us to expect from her the perfect theory of style. It lay in those accidents of time and place which obliged Greece to spin most of her speculations, like a spider, out of her own bowels. Now, for such a kind of literature style is, generally speaking, paramount; for a literature less self-evolved style is more liable to

neglect. Modern nations have laboured under the very opposite disadvantage. The excess of external materials has sometimes oppressed their creative power, and sometimes their meditative power. The exuberance of *objective* knowledge—that knowledge which carries the mind to materials existing *out* of itself, such as natural philosophy, chemistry, physiology, astronomy, geology, where the mind of the student goes for little and the external object for much—has had the effect of weaning men from subjective speculation, where the mind is all in all and the alien object next to nothing, and in that degree has weaned them from the culture of style. Now, on the other hand, if you suppose a man in the situation of Baron Trenck at Spandau, or Spinoza in the situation of Robinson Crusoe at Juan Fernandez, or a contemplative monk of the thirteenth century in his cell, you will perceive that—unless he were a poor feeble-minded creature like Cowper's Bastille prisoner, thrown by utter want of energy upon counting the very nails of his dungeon in all permutations and combinations—rather than quit the external world, he must in his own defence, were it only as a relief from gnawing thoughts, cultivate some *subjective* science ; that is, some branch of knowledge which, drawing everything from the mind itself, is independent of external resources. Such a science is found in the relations of man to God,—that is in theology ; in the determinations of space,—that is in geometry ; in the relations of existence or being universally to the human mind,—otherwise called metaphysics or ontology ; in the relations of the mind to itself,—otherwise called logic. Hence it was that the scholastic philosophy evolved itself, like a vast spider's loom, between the years 1100 and 1400. Men shut up in solitude, with the education oftentimes of scholars, with a life of leisure, but with hardly any books, and no means of observation, were absolutely forced, if they would avoid lunacy from energies unoccupied with any object, to create an object out of those very energies : they were driven by mere pressure of solitude, and sometimes of eternal silence, into raising vast aerial Jacob's ladders of vapoury metaphysics, just as endless as those meteorologic phenomena which technically bear that name, just as sublime and aspiring in their tendency

upwards, and sometimes (but not always) just as unsubstantial. In this present world of the practical and the ponderable, we so little understand or value such abstractions, though once our British schoolmen took the lead in these subtleties, that we confound their very natures and names. Most people with us mean by metaphysics what is properly called psychology. Now, these two are so far from being the same thing that the former could be pursued (and, to say the truth, was, in fact, under Aristotle created) by the monk in his unfurnished cell, where nothing ever entered but moonbeams. Whereas psychology is but in part a subjective science; in some proportion it is also *objective*, depending on multiplied experience, or on multiplied records of experience. Psychology, therefore, *could* not have been cultivated extensively by the schoolmen, and in fact would not have been cultivated at all but for the precedent of Aristotle. He, who laid the foundation of their metaphysics, which have nothing to do with man, had also written a work on man,—viz. on the human soul,—besides other smaller works on particular psychological phenomena (such as dreaming). Hence, through mere imitation, arose the short sketches of psychology amongst the schoolmen. Else *their* vocation lay to metaphysics, as a science which can dance upon moonbeams; and that vocation arose entirely out of their circumstances,—solitude, scholarship, and no books. Total extinction there was for them of all objective materials, and therefore, as a consequence inevitable, reliance on the solitary energies of their own minds. Like Christabel's chamber lamp, and the angels from which it was suspended, all was the invention of the unprompted artist,—

"All made out of the carver's brain."

Models he had none before him, for printed books were yet sleeping in futurity, and the gates of a grand asceticism were closed upon the world of life. We moderns, indeed, fancy that the necessities of the Romish Church—the mere instincts of self-protection in Popery—were what offered the bounty on this air-woven philosophy; and partly that is true; but it is most certain that all the bounties in this world would have failed to operate effectually, had they not

met with those circumstances in the silent life of monasteries which favoured the growth of such a self-spun metaphysical divinity. Monastic life predisposed the restlessness of human intellect to move in that direction. It was one of the few directions compatible with solitude and penury of books. It was the only one that opened an avenue at once to novelty and to freedom of thought. Now, then, precisely what the monastic life of the schoolmen was in relation to Philosophy, the Greece of Pericles had been in relation to Literature. What circumstances, what training, or predisposing influences existed for the monk in his cell, the same (or such as were tantamount) existed for the Grecian wit in the atmosphere of Athens. Three great agencies were at work, and unconsciously moulding the efforts of the earliest schoolmen about the opening of the Crusades, and of the latest some time after their close ;—three analogous agencies, the same in virtue, though varied in circumstances, gave impulse and guidance to the men of Greece, from Pericles, at the opening of Greek literature, to Alexander of Macedon, who witnessed its second harvest. And these agencies were: —1*st*, Leisure in excess, with a teeming intellect ; the burden, under a new-born excitement, of having nothing to do. 2*d*, Scarcity, without an absolute famine, of books ; enough to awake the dormant cravings, but not enough to gratify them without personal participation in the labours of intellectual creation. 3*d*, A revolutionary restlessness, produced by the recent establishment of a new and growing public interest.

The two first of these agencies for stimulating intellects already roused by agitating changes are sufficiently obvious ; though few perhaps are aware to what extent idleness prevailed in Pagan Greece, and even in Rome, under the system of household slavery, and under the bigoted contempt of commerce. But, waiving that point, and for the moment waiving also the degree of scarcity which affected books at the era of Pericles, we must say one word as to the two great analogous public interests which had formed themselves separately, and with a sense of revolutionary power, for the Greeks on the one hand, and for the Schoolmen on the other. As respected the Grecians, and especially the Athenians, this

excitement lay in the sentiment of nationality which had been first powerfully organised by the Persian War. Previously to that war the sentiment no doubt smouldered obscurely ; but the oriental invasion it was which kindled it into a torrent of flame. And it is interesting to remark that the very same cause which fused and combined these scattered tribes into the unity of Hellas, viz. their common interest in making head against an awful invader, was also the cause which most of all separated them into local parties by individual rivalship and by characteristic services. The arrogant Spartan, mad with a French-like self-glorification, boasted for ever of his little Thermopylæ. Ten years earlier the far sublimer display of Athenian Marathon, to say nothing of after-services at Salamis or elsewhere, had placed Attica at the summit of the Greek family. No matter whether selfish jealousy would allow that pre-eminence to be recognised ; doubtless it was felt. With this civic pre-eminence arose concurrently for Athens the development of an intellectual pre-eminence. On this we need say nothing. But even here, although the pre-eminence was too dazzling to have been at any time overlooked, yet, with some injustice in every age to Athens, her light has been recognised, but not what gave it value,—the contrasting darkness of all around her. This did not escape Paterculus, whose understanding is always vigilant. "We talk," says he, "of *Grecian* eloquence "or *Grecian* poetry, when we should say *Attic* ; for who has "ever heard of Theban orators, of Lacedæmonian artists, or "Corinthian poets?"[1] Æschylus, the first great author of Athens (for Herodotus was not Athenian), personally fought in the Persian War. Consequently the two modes of glory for Athens were almost of simultaneous emergence. And what we are now wishing to insist on is that precisely by

[1] People will here remind us that Aristotle was half a foreigner, being born at Stagira in Macedon. Ay, but amongst Athenian emigrants, and of an Athenian father! His mother, we think, was Thracian. The crossing of races almost uniformly terminates in producing splendour, at any rate energy, of intellect. If the roll of great men, or at least of energetic men, in Christendom were carefully examined, it would astonish us to observe how many have been the children of mixed marriages,—*i.e.* of alliances between two bloods as to nation, although the races might originally have been the same.

and through this great unifying event, viz. the double inroad of Asia militant upon Greece, Greece first became generally and reciprocally known to Greece herself; that Greece was then first arranged and *cast*, as it were dramatically, according to her capacities, services, duties; that a general consciousness was then diffused of the prevailing relations in which each political family stood to the rest; and that in the leading states every intellectual citizen drew a most agitating excitement from the particular character of glory which had settled upon his own tribe, and the particular station which had devolved upon it amongst the champions of civilisation.

That was the *positive* force acting upon Athens. Now, reverting to the monkish schoolmen, in order to complete the parallel, what was the corresponding force acting upon *them*? Leisure and want of books were accidents common to both parties,—to the scholastic age and to the age of Pericles. These were the *negative* forces, concurring with others to sustain a movement once begun, but incapable of giving the original impulse. What was the active, the *affirmative*, force which effected for the scholastic monks that unity and sense of common purposes which had been effected for the Greeks by the sudden development of a Grecian interest opposed to a Persian,—of a civilized interest, under sudden peril, opposed to the barbarism of the universal planet? What was there, for the race of monkish schoolmen labouring through three centuries, in the nature of a known palpable interest, which could balance so grand a principle of union and of effort as this acknowledged guardianship of civilisation had suddenly unfolded, like a banner, for the Greeks during the infancy of Pericles?[1] What *could* there be of corresponding grandeur?

Beforehand, this should have seemed impossible: but, in reality, a far grander mode of interest had arisen for the

[1] It is well to give unity to our grandest remembrances by connecting them, as many as can be, with the same centre. Pericles died in the year 429 before Christ. Supposing his age to be fifty-six, he would then be born about 485 B.C.,—that is, five years after the first Persian invasion under Darius, five years before the second under Xerxes.

schoolmen: grander, because more indefinite; more indefinite, because spiritual. It was this:—The Western or Latin Church had slowly developed her earthly power. As an edifice of civil greatness throughout the western world, she stood erect and towering. In the eleventh century, beyond all others, she had settled her deep foundations. The work thus far was complete; but blank civil power, though indispensable, was the feeblest of her arms, and, taken separately, was too frail to last, besides that it was liable to revolutions. The authority by which chiefly she ruled, had ruled, and hoped to rule, was spiritual; and, with the growing institutions of the age, embodying so much of future resistance, it was essential that this spiritual influence should be founded on a subtle philosophy, difficult to learn, difficult to refute; as also that many dogmas already established, such as tradition by way of prop to infallibility, should receive a far ampler development. The Latin Church, we must remember, was not yet that Church of Papal Rome, in the maturity of its doctrines and its pretensions, which it afterwards became. And, when we consider how vast a benefactress this Church had been to early Christendom when moulding and settling her foundations, as also in what light she must have appeared to her own pious children in centuries where as yet only the first local breezes of opposition had begun to whisper amongst the Albigenses, &c., we are bound in all candour to see that a sublimer interest could not have existed for any series of philosophers than the profound persuasion that by marrying metaphysics to divinity, two sciences even separately so grand, and by the pursuit of labyrinthine truth, they were building up an edifice reaching to the heavens,—the great spiritual fortress of the Catholic Church.

Here let us retrace the course of our speculations, lest the reader should suppose us to be wandering.

First, for the sake of illustrating more vividly the influences which acted on the Greece of Pericles, we bring forward another case analogously circumstanced, as moulded by the same causes:—1. The same condition of intellect under revolutionary excitement; 2. The same penury of books; 3. The same chilling gloom from the absence of

female charities,—the consequent reaction of that oppressive *ennui* which Helvetius fancied, amongst all human agencies, to be the most potent stimulant for the intellect; 4. The same (though far different) enthusiasm and elevation of thought from disinterested participation in forwarding a great movement of the age: for the one side involving the glory of their own brilliant country and concurrent with civilisation; for the other, co-extensive with all spiritual truth and all spiritual power.

Next, we remark that men living permanently under such influences must, of mere necessity, resort to that order of intellectual pursuits which requires little aid *ab extra*,—that order, in fact, which philosophically is called "subjective," as drawing much from our own proper selves, or little (if anything) from extraneous objects.

And then, thirdly, we remark that such pursuits are peculiarly favourable to the culture of style. In fact they force that culture. A man who has absolute facts to communicate from some branch of study external to himself, as physiology, suppose, or anatomy, or astronomy, is careless of style; or at least he may be so, because he is independent of style, for what he has to communicate neither readily admits, nor much needs, any graces in the mode of communication; the matter transcends and oppresses the manner. The matter tells without any manner at all. But he who has to treat a vague question, such as Cicero calls a *quæstio infinita*, where everything is to be finished out of his own peculiar feelings, or his own way of viewing things (in contradistinction to a *quæstio finita*, where determinate *data* from without already furnish the main materials), soon finds that the manner of treating it not only transcends the matter, but very often, and in a very great proportion, *is* the matter. In very many subjective exercises of the mind,—as, for instance, in that class of poetry which has been formally designated by this epithet (meditative poetry, we mean, in opposition to the Homeric, which is intensely objective), the problem before the writer is to project his own inner mind; to bring out consciously what yet lurks by involution in many unanalysed feelings; in short, to pass through a prism and radiate into distinct elements what previously had been

even to himself but dim and confused ideas intermixed with each other. Now, in such cases, the skill with which detention or conscious arrest is given to the evanescent, external projection to what is internal, outline to what is fluxionary, and body to what is vague,—all this depends entirely on the command over language as the one sole means of embodying ideas; and in such cases the style, or, in the largest sense, *manner*, is confluent with the matter. But, at all events, even by those who are most impatient of any subtleties, or what they consider "metaphysical" distinctions, thus much must be conceded: viz. that those who rest upon external facts, tangible realities, and circumstantial details,—in short, generally upon the *objective*, whether in a case of narration or of argument,—must for ever be less dependent upon style than those who have to draw upon their own understandings and their own peculiar feelings for the furniture and matter of their composition. A single illustration will make this plain. It is an old remark, and, in fact, a subject of continual experience, that lawyers fail as public speakers in the House of Commons. Even Erskine, the greatest of modern advocates, was nobody as a senator; and the "fluent Murray," two generations before him, had found his fluency give way under that mode of trial. But why? How was it possible that a man's fluency in one chamber of public business should thus suddenly be defeated and confounded in another? The reason is briefly expressed in Cicero's distinction between a *quæstio finita* and a *quæstio infinita*. In the courts of law, the orator was furnished with a brief, an abstract of facts, downright statements upon oath, circumstances of presumption, and, in short, a whole volume of topics external to his own mind. Sometimes, it is true, the advocate would venture a little out to sea *proprio marte*: in a case of *crim. con.*, for instance, he would attempt a little picture of domestic happiness drawn from his own funds. But he was emboldened to do this from his certain knowledge that in the facts of his brief he had always a hasty retreat in case of any danger that he should founder. If the little picture prospered, it was well: if not, if symptoms of weariness began to arise in the audience, or of hesitation in himself, it was but to cut the matter short, and return to the *terra firma* of his brief,

when all again was fluent motion. Besides that, each separate transition, and the distribution of the general subject, offered themselves spontaneously in a law case; the logic was given as well as the method. Very often the mere order of chronology dictated the succession and arrangement of the topics. Now, on the other hand, in a House of Commons oration, although sometimes there may occur statements of fact and operose calculations, still these are never more than a text, at the very best, for the political discussion, but often no more than a subsequent illustration or proof attached to some one of its heads. The main staple of any long speech must always be some general view of national policy; and, in Cicero's language, such a view must always be *infinita*; that is, not determined *ab extra*, but shaped and drawn from the funds of one's own understanding. The facts are here subordinate and ministerial; in the case before a jury the facts are all in all. The forensic orator satisfies his duty if he does but take the facts exactly as they stand in his brief, and place them before his audience in that order, and even (if he should choose it) in those words. The parliamentary orator has no opening for facts at all, but as he himself may be able to create such an opening by some previous expositions of doctrine or opinion, of the probable or expedient. The one is always creeping along shore; the other is always out at sea. Accordingly, the degrees of anxiety which severally affect the two cases are best brought to the test in this one question—"*What shall I say next?*"—an anxiety besetting orators like that which besets poor men in respect to their children's daily bread. "This moment it is secured; but, alas for the next!" Now, the judicial orator finds an instant relief: the very points of the case are numbered; and, if he cannot find more to say upon No. 7, he has only to pass on and call up No. 8. Whereas the deliberative orator, in a senate or a literary meeting, finds himself always in this situation,—that, having reached with difficulty that topic which we have supposed to be No. 7, one of three cases uniformly occurs: either he does not perceive any No. 8 at all; or, secondly, he sees a distracting choice of No. 8's—the ideas to which he might next pass are many, but he does not see whither they will lead him; or, thirdly,

he sees a very fair and promising No. 8, but cannot in any way discover off-hand how he is to effect a transition to this new topic. He cannot, with the rapidity requisite, modulate out of the one key into the other. His anxiety increases, utter confusion masters him, and he breaks down.

We have made this digression by way of seeking, in a well-known case of public life, an illustration of the difference between a subjective and an objective exercise of the mind. It is the sudden translation from the one exercise to the other which, and which only, accounts for the failure of advocates when attempting senatorial efforts. Once used to depend on memorials or briefs of facts, or of evidence not self-derived, the advocate, like a child in leading-strings, loses that command over his own internal resources which otherwise he might have drawn from practice. In fact, the advocate, with his brief lying before him, is precisely in the condition of a parliamentary speaker who places a written speech or notes for a speech in his hat. This trick has sometimes been practised; and the consternation which would befall the orator in the case of such a hat-speech being suddenly blown away precisely realizes the situation of a *nisi prius* orator when first getting on his legs in the House of Commons. He has swum with bladders all his life: suddenly he must swim without them.

This case explains why it is that all subjective branches of study favour the cultivation of style. Whatsoever is entirely independent of the mind, and external to it, is generally equal to its own enunciation. Ponderable facts and external realities are intelligible in almost any language: they are self-explained and self-sustained. But, the more closely any exercise of mind is connected with what is internal and individual in the sensibilities,—that is, with what is philosophically termed *subjective*,—precisely in that degree, and the more subtly, does the style or the embodying of the thoughts cease to be a mere separable ornament, and in fact the more does the manner, as we expressed it before, become confluent with the matter. In saying this, we do but vary the form of what we once heard delivered on this subject by Mr. Wordsworth. His remark was by far the weightiest thing we ever heard on the subject of style; and it was this:

that it is in the highest degree unphilosophic to call language or diction "the *dress* of thoughts." And what was it then that he would substitute? Why this: he would call it "the *incarnation* of thoughts." Never in one word was so profound a truth conveyed. Mr. Wordsworth was thinking, doubtless, of poetry like his own: viz. that which is eminently meditative. And the truth is apparent on consideration: for, if language were merely a dress, then you could separate the two; you could lay the thoughts on the left hand, the language on the right. But, generally speaking, you can no more deal thus with poetic thoughts than you can with soul and body. The union is too subtle, the intertexture too ineffable,—each co-existing not merely *with* the other, but each *in* and *through* the other. An image, for instance, a single word, often enters into a thought as a constituent part. In short, the two elements are not united as a body with a separable dress, but as a mysterious incarnation. And thus, in what proportion the thoughts are subjective, in that same proportion does the very essence become identical with the expression, and the style become confluent with the matter.

The Greeks, by want of books, philosophical instruments, and innumerable other aids to all objective researches, being thrown more exclusively than we upon their own unaided minds, cultivated logic, ethics, metaphysics, psychology,—all thoroughly subjective studies. The schoolmen, in the very same situation, cultivated precisely the same field of knowledge. The Greeks, indeed, added to their studies that of geometry; for the inscription over the gate of the Academy ("Let no one enter who is not instructed in geometry") sufficiently argues that this science must have made some progress in the days of Pericles, when it could thus be made a general qualification for admission to a learned establishment within thirty years after his death. But geometry is partly an objective, partly a subjective, study. With this exception, the Greeks and the Monastic Schoolmen trod the very same path.

Consequently, in agreement with our principle, both ought to have found themselves in circumstances favourable to the cultivation of style. And it is certain that they did.

As an *art*, as a practice, it was felicitously pursued in both cases. It is true that the harsh ascetic mode of treating philosophy by the schoolmen generated a corresponding barrenness, aridity, and repulsiveness, in the rigid forms of their technical language. But, however offensive to genial sensibilities, this diction was a perfect thing in its kind; and, to do it justice, we ought rather to compare it with the exquisite language of algebra,—equally irreconcilable to all standards of æsthetic beauty; but yet, for the three qualities of elliptical rapidity (that rapidity which constitutes very much of what is meant by *elegance* in mathematics), of absolute precision, and of simplicity, this algebraic language is unrivalled amongst human inventions. On the other hand, the Greeks, whose objects did not confine them to these austere studies, carried out their corresponding excellence in style upon a far wider, and indeed a comprehensive, scale. Almost all modes of style were exemplified amongst *them*. Thus we endeavour to show that the subjective pursuits of the Greeks and the Schoolmen ought to have favoured a command of appropriate diction; and afterwards that it did.

But, *fourthly*, we are entitled to expect that, wherever style exists in great development as a practice, it will soon be investigated with corresponding success as a theory. If fine music is produced spontaneously in short snatches by the musical sensibility of a people, it is a matter of certainty that the science of composition, that counterpoint, that thorough-bass, will soon be cultivated with a commensurate zeal. This is matter of such obvious inference that in any case where it fails we look for some extraordinary cause to account for it. Now, in Greece, with respect to style, the inference *did* fail. Style, as an art, was in a high state of culture; style, as a science, was nearly neglected. How is this to be accounted for? It arose naturally enough out of one great phenomenon in the condition of ancient times, and the relation which that bore to literature and to all human exertion of the intellect.

Did the reader ever happen to reflect on the great idea of *publication*? An idea we call it; because even in our own times, with all the mechanic aids of steam-presses, &c., this object is most imperfectly approached, and is destined,

perhaps, for ever to remain an unattainable ideal,—useful (like all ideals) in the way of regulating our aims, but also as a practicable object not reconcilable with the limitation of human power. For it is clear that, if books were multiplied by a thousandfold, and truths of all kinds were carried to the very fireside of every family,—nay, placed below the eyes of every individual,—still the purpose of any universal publication would be defeated and utterly confounded, were it only by the limited opportunities of readers. One condition of publication defeats another. Even so much as a general publication is a hopeless idea. Yet, on the other hand, publication in some degree, and by some mode, is a *sine qua non* condition for the generation of literature. Without a larger sympathy than that of his own personal circle, it is evident that no writer could have a motive for those exertions and previous preparations without which excellence is not attainable in any art whatsoever.

Now, in our own times, it is singular, and really philosophically curious, to remark the utter blindness of writers, readers, publishers, and all parties whatever interested in literature, as to the trivial fraction of publicity which settles upon each separate work. The very multiplication of books has continually defeated the object in growing progression. Readers have increased, the engines of publication have increased; but books, increasing in a still greater proportion, have left as the practical result an average quotient of publicity for each book, taken apart, continually decreasing. And, if the whole world were readers, probably the average publicity for each separate work would reach a *minimum*; such would be the concurrent increase of books. But even this view of the case keeps out of sight the most monstrous forms of this phenomenon. The inequality of the publication has the effect of keeping very many books absolutely without a reader. The majority of books are never opened; five hundred copies may be printed, or half as many more; of these it may happen that five are carelessly turned over. Popular journals, again, which carry a promiscuous miscellany of papers into the same number of hands, as a stage-coach must convey all its passengers at the same rate of speed, dupe the public with a notion that here at least all are read.

Not at all. One or two are read from the interest attached to their subjects. Occasionally one is read a little from the ability with which it treats a subject not otherwise attractive. The rest have a better chance certainly than books, because they are at any rate placed under the eye and in the hand of readers. But this is no more than a variety of the same case. A hasty glance may be taken by one in a hundred at the less attractive papers; but reading is out of the question. Then, again, another delusion, by which all parties disguise the truth, is the absurd belief that, not being read at present, a book may, however, be revived hereafter. Believe it not! This is possible only with regard to books that demand to be studied, where the merit is slowly discovered. Every month, every day indeed, produces its own novelties, with the additional zest that they *are* novelties. Every future year, which will assuredly fail in finding time for its own books, —how should it find time for defunct books? No, no; every year buries its own literature. Since Waterloo there have been added upwards of fifty thousand books and pamphlets to the shelves of our *native* literature, taking no account of foreign importations.[1] Of these fifty thousand possibly two hundred still survive; possibly twenty will survive for a couple of centuries; possibly five or six thousand may have been indifferently read; the rest not so much as opened. In this hasty sketch of a calculation we assume a single copy to represent a whole edition. But, in order to have the total sum of copies numerically neglected since Waterloo, it will be requisite to multiply fourty-four thousand by five hundred at the least, but probably by a higher multiplier. At the very moment of writing this—by way of putting into a brighter light the inconceivable blunder as to publicity habitually committed by sensible men of the world—let us mention what we now see before us in a public journal. Speaking with disapprobation of a just but disparaging expression applied to the French war-mania by a London morning paper, the writer has described

[1] Only 50,000 in the twenty-five years between 1815 (the date of Waterloo) and 1840 (the date of De Quincey's paper) seems a very moderate computation, giving an average of only 2000 for every year, whereas our annual average now is between 5000 and 6000.—M.

it as likely to irritate the people of France. O genius of arithmetic! The offending London journal has a circulation of four thousand copies daily; and it is assumed that thirty-three millions, of whom assuredly not twenty-five individuals will ever see the English paper as a visible object, nor five ever read the passage in question, are to be maddened by one word in a colossal paper laid this morning on a table amongst fifty others, and to-morrow morning pushed off that table by fifty others of more recent date. How are such delusions possible? Simply from the previous delusion, of ancient standing, connected with printed characters: what is printed seems to every man invested with some fatal character of publicity such as cannot belong to mere MS.; whilst, in the meantime, out of every thousand printed pages, one at the most, but at all events a very small proportion indeed, is in any true sense more public when printed than previously as a manuscript; and that one, even that thousandth part, perishes as effectually in a few days to each separate reader as the words perish in our daily conversation. Out of all that we talk, or hear others talk, through the course of a year, how much remains on the memory at the closing day of December? Quite as little, we may be sure, survives from most people's reading. A book answers its purpose by sustaining the intellectual faculties in motion through the current act of reading, and a general deposition or settling takes effect from the sum of what we read; even that, however, chiefly according to the previous condition in which the book finds us for understanding it, and referring them to heads under some existing arrangement of our knowledge. Publication is an idle term applied to what is not published; and nothing is *published* which is not made known *publicly* to the understanding as well as the eye; whereas, for the enormous majority of what is printed, we cannot say so much as that it is made known to the eyes.

For what reason have we insisted on this unpleasant view of a phenomenon incident to the limitation of our faculties, and apparently without remedy? Upon another occasion it might have been useful to do so, were it only to impress upon every writer the vast importance of compres-

sion. Simply to retrench one word from each sentence, one superfluous epithet, for example, would probably increase the disposable time of the public by one twelfth part; in other words, would add another month to the year, or raise any sum of volumes read from eleven to twelve hundred. A mechanic operation would effect *that* change; but, by cultivating a closer logic and more severe habits of thinking, perhaps two sentences out of each three might be pruned away, and the amount of possible publication might thus be increased in a threefold degree. A most serious duty, therefore, and a duty which is annually growing in solemnity, appears to be connected with the culture of an unwordy diction; much more, however, with the culture of clear thinking,—that being the main key to good writing, and consequently to fluent reading.

But all this, though not unconnected with our general theme, is wide of our immediate purpose. The course of our logic at this point runs in the following order. The Athenians, from causes assigned, ought to have consummated the whole science and theory of style. But they did *not*. Why? Simply from a remarkable deflexion or bias given to their studies by a difficulty connected with *publication*. For some modes of literature the Greeks *had* a means of publication, for many they had *not*. That one difference, as we shall show, disturbed the just valuation of style.

Some mode of publication must have existed for Athens: that is evident. The mere *fact* of a literature proves it. For without public sympathy how can a literature arise? or public sympathy without a regular organ of publication? What poet would submit to the labours of his most difficult art, if he had no reasonable prospect of a large audience, and somewhat of a permanent audience, to welcome and adopt his productions?

Now then, in the Athens of Pericles, what *was* the audience, how composed, and how insured, on which the literary composer might rely? By what channel, in short, did the Athenian writer calculate on a *publication*? This is a very interesting question, and, as regards much in the civilisation of Greece, both for what it caused and what it prevented, is an important question. In the elder days,—in fact we may

suppose through the five hundred years from the Trojan expedition to Pisistratus and Solon,—all *publication* was effected through two classes of men: the public reciters and the public singers. Thus, no doubt, it was that the Iliad and Odyssey were sent down to the hands of Pisistratus, who has the traditional reputation of having first arranged and revised these poems. These reciters or singers to the harp would probably rehearse one entire book of the Iliad at every splendid banquet. Every book would be kept in remembrance and currency by the peculiar local relations of particular states or particular families to ancestors connected with Troy. This mode of publication, however, had the disadvantage that it was among the arts ministerial to sensual enjoyment. And it is some argument for the extensive diffusion of such a practice in the early times of Greece that, both in the Greece of later times, and, by adoption from her, in the Rome of cultivated ages, we find the ἀκροαματα as commonly established by way of a dinner appurtenance—that is, exercises of display addressed to the ear, recitations of any kind with and without music—not at all less frequently than ὁραματα, or the corresponding display to the eye (dances or combats of gladiators). These were doubtless inheritances from the ancient usages of Greece,—modes of publication resorted to long before the Olympic Games by the mere necessitous cravings for sympathy, and kept up long after that institution, as in itself too brief and rare in its recurrence to satisfy the necessity.

Such was the earliest effort of publication, and in its feeble infancy; for this, besides its limitation in point of audience, was confined to narrative poetry. But, when the ideal of Greece was more and more exalted by nearer comparison with barbarous standards, after the sentiment of patriotism had coalesced with vindictive sentiments, and when towering cities began to reflect the grandeur of this land as in a visual mirror, these cravings for publicity became more restless and irrepressible. And at length, in the time of Pericles, concurrently with the external magnificence of the city, arose for Athens two modes of publication, each upon a scale of gigantic magnitude.

What were these? The *Theatre* and the *Agora* or

Forum: publication by the Stage, and publication by the Hustings. These were the extraordinary modes of publication which arose for Athens: one by a sudden birth, like that of Minerva, in the very generation of Pericles; the other slowly maturing itself from the generation of Pisistratus, which preceded that of Pericles by a hundred years. This double publication, scenic and forensic, was virtually, and for all the loftier purposes of publication, the press of Athens. And, however imperfect a representative this may seem of a typographical publication, certain it is that in some important features the Athenian publication had separate advantages of its own. It was a far more effective and correct publication in the first place, enjoying every aid of powerful accompaniment from voice, gesture, scenery, music, and suffering in no instance from false reading or careless reading. Then, secondly, it was a far wider publication: each drama being read (or heard, which is a far better thing) by 25,000 or 30,000 persons, counterbalancing at least forty editions such as we on an average publish; each oration being delivered with just emphasis to perhaps 7000. But why, in this mention of a stage or hustings publication, as opposed to a publication by the printing-press, why was it, we are naturally admonished to ask, that the Greeks had no press? The ready answer will be,—because the art of printing had not been discovered. But that is an error, the detection of which we owe to the present Archbishop of Dublin. The art of printing *was* discovered. It had been discovered repeatedly. The art which multiplied the legends upon a coin or medal (a work which the ancients performed by many degrees better than we moderns,—for we make it a mechanic art, they a fine art) had in effect anticipated the art of printing. It was an art, this typographic mystery, which awoke and went back to sleep many times over from mere defect of materials. Not the defect of typography as an art, but the defect of *paper* as a material for keeping this art in motion,—*there* lay the reason, as Dr. Whately most truly observes, why printed books had no existence amongst the Greeks of Pericles, or afterwards amongst the Romans of Cicero. And why was there no paper? The common reason applying to both countries was the want of linen rags,

and that want arose from the universal habit of wearing woollen garments. In this respect Athens and Rome were on the same level. But for Athens the want was driven to a further extremity by the slenderness of her commerce with Egypt, whence only any substitute could have been drawn.

Even for Rome itself the scarcity of paper ran through many degrees. Horace, the poet, was amused with the town of Equotuticum for two reasons: as incapable of entering into hexameter verse from its prosodial quantity (*versu quod dicere non est*); and because it purchased water (*vœnit vilissima rerum aqua*),—a circumstance in which it agrees with the well-known Clifton, above the hot wells of Bristol, where water is bought by the shilling's worth. But neither Horatian Equotuticum nor Bristolian Clifton can ever have been as "hard up" for water as the Mecca caravan. And the differences were as great in respect to the want of paper between the Athens of Pericles or Alexander and the Rome of Augustus Cæsar. Athens had bad poets, whose names have come down to modern times; but Athens could no more have afforded to punish bad authors by sending their works to grocers—

> "in vicum vendentem pus et odores,
> Et piper, et quicquid *chartis amicitur ineptis*"—

than London, because gorged with the wealth of two Indies, can afford to pave her streets with silver. This practice of applying unsaleable authors to the ignoble uses of retail dealers in petty articles must have existed in Rome for some time before it could have attracted the notice of Horace, and upon some considerable scale as a known public usage before it could have roused any echoes of public mirth as a satiric allusion, or have had any meaning and sting.

In that one revelation of Horace we see a proof how much paper had become more plentiful. It is true that so long as men dressed in woollen materials it was impossible to look for a *cheap* paper. Maga might have been printed at Rome very well for ten guineas a copy. Paper was dear, undoubtedly, but it could be had. On the other hand, how desperate must have been the bankruptcy at Athens in all

materials for receiving the record of thoughts, when we find a polished people having no better tickets or cards for conveying their sentiments to the public than shells! Thence came the very name for civil banishment, viz. *ostracism*, because the votes were marked on an *ostracon*, or marine shell. Again, in another great city, viz. Syracuse, you see men reduced to *petalism*, or marking their votes by the petals of shrubs. Elsewhere, as indeed many centuries nearer to our own times in Constantinople, bull's hide was used for the same purpose.

Well might the poor Greeks adopt the desperate expedient of white plastered walls as the best memorandum-book for a man who had thoughts occurring to him in the night-time. Brass only, or marble, could offer any lasting memorial for thoughts; and upon what material the parts were written out for the actors on the Athenian stage, or how the elaborate revisals of the text could be carried on, is beyond our power of conjecture.

In this appalling state of embarrassment for the great poet or prose writer, what consequences would naturally arise? A king's favourite and friend like Aristotle might command the most costly materials. For instance, if you look back, from this day to 1800, into the advertising records or catalogues of great Parisian publishers, you will find more works of excessive luxury, costing from a thousand *francs* for each copy all the way up to as many *guineas*, in each separate period of fifteen years than in the whole forty among the wealthier and more enterprising publishers of Great Britain. What is the explanation? Can the very moderate incomes of the French gentry afford to patronize works which are beyond the purses of our British aristocracy, who, besides, are so much more of a reading class? Not so: the patronage for these Parisian works of luxury is not domestic, it is exotic: chiefly from emperors and kings; from great national libraries; from rich universities; from the grandees of Russia, Hungary, or Great Britain; and generally from those who, living in splendid castles or hotels, require corresponding furniture, and therefore corresponding books, because to such people books are necessarily furniture,— since, upon the principles of good taste, they

must correspond with the splendour of all around them. And in the age of Alexander there were already purchasers enough among royal houses, or the imitators of such houses, to encourage costly copies of attractive works. Aristotle was a privileged man. But in other less favoured cases the strong yearnings for public sympathy were met by blank impossibilities. Much martyrdom, we feel assured, was then suffered by poets. Thousands, it is true, perish in our days, who have never had a solitary reader. But still the existence *in print* gives a delusive feeling that they *may* have been read. They are standing in the market all day, and somebody, unperceived by themselves, may have thrown an eye upon their wares. The thing is possible. But for the ancient writer there was a sheer physical impossibility that any man should sympathize with what he never could have seen, except under the two conditions we have mentioned.

These two cases there were of exemption from this dire physical resistance,—two conditions which made publication possible; and, under the horrible circumstances of sequestration for authors in general, need it be said that to benefit by either advantage was sought with such a zeal as, in effect, extinguished all other literature? If a man could be a poet for the stage, a *scriptor scenicus*, in that case he was published. If a man could be admitted as an orator, as a regular *demagogus*, upon the popular *bema* or hustings, in that case he was published. If his own thoughts were a torment to him, until they were reverberated from the hearts and flashing eyes and clamorous sympathy of a multitude, thus only an outlet was provided, a mouth was opened, for the volcano surging within his brain. The vast theatre was an organ of publication; the political forum was an organ of publication. And on this twofold arena a torch was applied to that inflammable gas which exhaled spontaneously from so excitable a mind as the mind of the Athenian.

Need we wonder, then, at the torrent-like determination with which Athenian literature, from the era 444 B.C. to the era 333 B.C., ran headlong into one or other channel,—the scenical poetry or the eloquence of the hustings? For an Athenian in search of popular applause or of sympathy there was no other avenue to either; unless, indeed, in the char-

acter of an artist, or of a leading soldier: but too often, in this latter class, it happened that mercenary foreigners had a preference. And thus it was that, during that period when the popular cast of government throughout Greece awakened patriotic emulation, scarcely anything is heard of in literature (allowing for the succession to philosophic chairs, which made it their pride to be private and exclusive) except dramatic poetry on the one hand, comic or tragic, and political oratory on the other.

As to this last avenue to the public ear, how it was abused, in what excess it became the nuisance and capital scourge of Athens, there needs only the testimony of all contemporary men who happened to stand aloof from that profession, or all subsequent men even of that very profession who were not blinded by some corresponding interest in some similar system of delusion. Euripides and Aristophanes, contemporary with the earliest practitioners of name and power on that stage of jugglers, are overrun with expressions of horror for these public pests. "You have every qualification," says Aristophanes to an aspirant, "that could be wished for a public orator: φωνη μιαρα—a voice like seven devils; κακος γεγονας—you are by nature a scamp; ἀγοραιος εἰ—you are up to snuff in the business of the forum." From Euripides might be gathered a small volume, relying merely upon so much of his works as yet survives, in illustration of the horror which possessed him for this gang of public misleaders:—

> Τουτ' ἐσθ' ὁ θνητων εὐ πολεις οἰκουμενας
> Δομους τ' ἀπολλυτ'—οἱ καλοι λιαν λογοι.

"This is what overthrows cities admirably organized, and the households of men,—your superfine harangues." Cicero, full four centuries later, looking back to this very period from Pericles to Alexander, friendly as he was by the *esprit de corps* to the order of orators, and professionally biassed to uphold the civil uses of eloquence, yet, as an honest man, cannot deny that it was this gift of oratory, hideously abused, which led to the overthrow of Athens and the ruin of Grecian liberty: "Illa vetus Græcia, quæ quondam opibus, imperio, gloria floruit, hoc uno malo concidit,—*libertate*

immoderata ac licentia concionum." Quintilian, standing on the very same ground of professional prejudice, all in favour of public orators, yet is forced into the same sorrowful confession. In one of the Declamations ascribed to him he says, "Civitatum status scimus ab oratoribus esse conversos"; and in illustration he adds the example of Athens: "sive illam Atheniensium civitatem (quondam late principem) intueri placeat, accisas ejus vires animadvertemus *vitio concionantium.*" Root and branch, Athens was laid prostrate by her wicked Radical orators; for Radical, in the elliptic phrase of modern politics, they were almost to a man; and in this feature above all others (a feature often scornfully exposed by Euripides) those technically known as οἱ λεγοντες, the speaking men, and as οἱ δημαγωγοι,[1] the misleaders of the mob, offer a most suitable ancestry for the modern leaders of Radicalism, — that with their base, fawning flatteries of the people they mixed up the venom of vipers against their opponents and against the aristocracy of the land.

Ὑπογλυκαινειν ῥηματιοις μαγειρικοις—

"subtly to wheedle the people with honeyed words dressed to its palate": this had been the ironical advice of the scoffing Aristophanes. That practice made the mob orator contemptible to manly tastes, rather than hateful. But the sacrifice of independence — the "pride which licks the dust"—is the readiest training for all uncharitableness and falsehood towards those who seem either rivals for the same base purposes, or open antagonists for nobler. And, accordingly, it is remarked by Euripides that these pestilent abusers of the popular confidence would bring a mischief upon Athens before they had finished, equally by their

[1] With respect to the word "demagogues," as a technical designation for the political orators and partisans at Athens (otherwise called οἱ προσταται, those who headed any movement), it is singular that so accurate a Greek scholar as Henry Stephens should have supposed *linguas promptas ad plebem concitandum* (an expression of Livy's) *potius των δημαγωγων fuisse quam των ῥητορων*; as if the demagogues were a separate class from the popular orators. But, says Valckenaer, the relation is soon stated: not all the Athenian orators were demagogues, but all the demagogues were in fact, and technically were called, orators.

sycophancies to the mob and by their libels of foreign princes. Hundreds of years afterwards, a Greek writer, upon reviewing this most interesting period of one hundred and eleven years, from Pericles to Alexander, sums up and repeats the opinion of Euripides in this general representative portrait of Attic oratory, with respect to which we wish to ask, Can any better delineation be given of a Chartist, or generically of a modern Jacobin?—'Ο δημαγωγος κακοδιδασκαλειτους πολλους, λεγων τα κεχαρισμενα—"The mob-leader dupes the multitude with false doctrines, whilst delivering things soothing to their credulous vanity." This is one half of his office,—sycophancy to the immediate purse-holders, and poison to the sources of truth; the other half is expressed with the same spirit of prophecy as regards the British future, και διαβολαις αὐτους ἐξαλλοτριοι προς τους ἀριστους,—"and by lying calumnies he utterly alienates them in relation to their own native aristocracy."

Now this was a base pursuit, though somewhat relieved by the closing example of Demosthenes, who, amidst much frailty, had a generous nature; and he showed it chiefly by his death, and in his lifetime, to use Milton's words, by uttering many times "odious truth," which, with noble courage, he compelled the mob to hear. But one man could not redeem a national dishonour. It *was* such, and such it was felt to be. Men, therefore, of elevated natures, and men of gentle pacific natures, equally revolted from a trade of lies, as regarded the audience, and of strife, as regarded the competitors. There remained the one other pursuit of scenical poetry; and it hardly needs to be said what crowding there was amongst all the energetic minds of Athens into one or other of these pursuits: the one for the unworldly and idealizing, the other for the coarsely ambitious. These, therefore, became the two *quasi* professions of Athens, and at the same time, in a sense more exclusive than can now be true of *our* professions, became the sole means of publication for truth of any class, and a publication by many degrees more certain, more extensive, and more immediate, than ours by the press.

The Athenian theatre published an edition of thirty thousand copies in one day, enabling, in effect, every male

citizen capable of attending, from the age of twenty to sixty, together with many thousands of domiciled aliens, to read the drama, with the fullest understanding of its sense and poetic force that could be effected by natural powers of voice and action, combined with all possible auxiliaries of art, of music, of pantomimic dancing, and the whole carried home to the heart by visible and audible sympathy in excess. This, but in a very inferior form as regarded the adjuncts of art, and the scale of the theatre, and the *mise en scène*, was precisely the advantage of Charles I. for appreciating Shakspere.

It was a standing reproach of the Puritans, adopted even by Milton, a leaden shaft feathered and made buoyant by *his* wit, that the King had adopted that stage poet as the companion of his closet retirements. So it would have been a pity if these malignant persecutors of the royal solitude should have been liars as well as fanatics. Doubtless, even when king, and in his afflictions, this storm-vexed man did read Shakspere. But that was not the original way in which he acquired his acquaintance with the poet. A Prince of Wales, what between public claims and social claims, finds little time for reading after the period of childhood,—that is, at any period when he can comprehend a great poet. And it was as Prince of Wales that Charles prosecuted his studies of Shakspere. He saw continually at Whitehall, personated by the best actors of the time, illustrated by the stage management, and assisted by the mechanic displays of Inigo Jones, all the principal dramas of Shakspere actually performed.[1] That was publication with an Athenian advantage. A thousand copies of a book may be brought into public libraries, and not one of them opened. But the three thousand copies of a play which Drury Lane used to publish in one night were in the most literal sense as well as in spirit read,—properly punctuated by the speakers, made intelligible by voice and action endowed with life and emphasis: in short, on each successive performance, a very

[1] An exaggeration! There were frequent theatrical performances in Whitehall in the later part of James's reign and the earlier of Charles's, but nothing like such a run on Shakespeare in Whitehall Palace as this sentence would suggest.—M.

large edition of a fine tragedy was published in the most impressive sense of publication,—not merely with accuracy, but with a mimic reality that forbade all forgetting, and was liable to no inattention.

Now, if Drury Lane published a drama for Shakspere by three thousand copies in one night,[1] the Athenian theatre published ten times that amount for Sophocles. And this mode of publication in Athens, not co-operating (as in modern times) with other modes, but standing out in solitary conspicuous relief, gave an artificial bounty upon that one mode of poetic composition, as the hustings did upon one mode of prose composition. And those two modes, being thus cultivated to the utter exclusion of others which did not benefit by that bounty of publication, gave an unnatural bias to the national style, determined in effect upon too narrow a scale the operative ideal of composition, and finally made the dramatic artist and the mob orator the two sole intellectual professions for Athens. Hence came a great limitation of style in practice; and hence, secondly, for reasons connected with these two modes of composition, a general neglect of style as a didactic theory.[2]

[1] An anachronism! *Drury Lane* was not the great theatrical centre of the metropolis till after the Restoration. There were, indeed, stage-performances at the *Cockpit Theatre* in Drury Lane from about the year 1616 (the year of Shakespeare's death); but the *Drury Lane Theatre* of famous memory, which De Quincey seems to have had in his mind, dates from 1663 only; and it was at the *Blackfriars* and the *Globe*, on opposite banks of the river, that Shakespeare's plays were first published in his own lifetime.—M.

[2] In the Preface to the volume of De Quincey's Collective Edition containing his reprint of this paper on Style there was this note of correction by way of Postscript:—"Amongst the vicarious modes of "Publication resorted to by the Ancients in default of the Printing-"Press I have forgotten to mention the Roman Recitations in the "Porticos of Baths, &c."—M.

LANGUAGE [1]

No language is stationary, except in rude and early periods of society. The languages of nations like the English and French, walking in the van of civilization, having popular institutions, and taking part in the business of the earth with morbid energy, are placed under the action of causes that will not allow them any respite from change. Neologism, in revolutionary times, is not an infirmity of caprice, seeking (to use the proverb of Cervantes) "for better bread than is made of wheat," but is a mere necessity of the unresting intellect. New ideas, new aspects of old ideas, new relations of objects to each other, or to man—the subject who contemplates those objects,—absolutely insist on new words. And it would not be a more idle misconception to find a disease in the pains of growth than to fancy a decay of vernacular purity in the multitude of verbal coinages which modern necessities of thought and action are annually calling forth on the banks of the Thames and the Seine.

Such coinages, however, do not all stand upon the same basis of justification. Some are regularly formed from known roots upon known analogies; others are formed licentiously. Some again meet a real and clamorous necessity of the intellect; others are fitted to gratify the mere appetite for innovation. They take their rise in various sources, and are moulded with various degrees of skill. Let us throw a hasty glance on the leading classes of these coinages, and of the laws which appear to govern them, or of the anomalies

[1] Place of original not ascertained: reprinted by De Quincey in 1858 in vol. ix of his Collective Edition of his Writings.—M.

with which they are sometimes associated. There are also large cases of innovation in which no process of coinage whatever is manifested, but perhaps a simple restoration of old words, long since obsolete in literature and good society, yet surviving to this hour in provincial usage, or, again, an extension and emancipation of terms heretofore narrowly restricted to a technical or a professional use—as we see exemplified in the word *ignore*; which, until very lately, was so sacred to the sole use of grand juries that a man would have been obscurely suspected by a policeman, and would indeed have suspected himself, of something like petty larceny in forcing it into any general and philosophic meaning,—which, however, it has now assumed, with little offence to good taste, and with *yeoman* service to the intellect. Other cases, again, there are, and at present far too abundant, in which the necessities of social intercourse, and not unfrequently the necessities of philosophic speculation, are provisionally supplied by *slang*, and the phraseology that is born and bred in the streets. The market-place and the highway, the *forum* and the *trivium*, are rich seed-plots for the sowing and the reaping of many indispensable ideas. That a phrase belongs to the slang dictionary is certainly no absolute recommendation; sometimes such a phrase may be simply disgusting from its vulgarity, without adding anything to the meaning or to the rhetorical force. How shocking to hear an official dignitary saying (as but yesterday *was* heard) "What *on earth* could the clause mean?" Yet neither is it any safe ground of absolute excommunication even from the sanctities of literature that a phrase is entirely a growth of the street. The word *humbug*, for instance, rests upon a rich and comprehensive basis: it cannot be rendered adequately either by German or by Greek, the two richest of human languages; and without this expressive word we should all be disarmed for one great case, continually recurrent, of social enormity. A vast mass of villainy, that cannot otherwise be reached by legal penalties, or brought within the rhetoric of scorn, would go at large with absolute impunity, were it not through the stern Rhadamanthian aid of this virtuous and inexorable word.

Meantime, as it would not suit the purposes of a sketch

to be too systematic in the treatment of a subject so inexhaustible as language and style, neither would it be within the limits of just proportion that I should be too elaborate in rehearsing beforehand the several avenues and classes of cases through which an opening is made for new words amongst ourselves or the French. I will select such cases for separate notice as seem most interesting or most seasonable. But, previously, as a proper mode of awakening the reader into giving relief and just prominence to the subject, I will point attention to the varying scale of appreciation applied to the diction and the national language, as a ground of national distinction and honour, by the five great intellectual nations of ancient and modern history: viz. the Greeks, the Romans, the French, the English, and the Germans. In no country, except one, is such a preface more requisite than in England, where it is strange enough that, whilst the finest models of style exist, and sub-consciously operate effectively as sources of delight, the *conscious* valuation of style is least perfectly developed.

Every nation has reason to feel interested in the pretensions of its own native language, in the original quality of that language or characteristic *kind* of its powers, and in the particular *degree* of its expansions at the period in question. Even semi-barbarous tribes sometimes talk grandiloquently on this head, and ascribe to uncultivated jargons a fertility or a range of expressiveness quite incompatible with the particular stage of social development which the national capacities have reached. Not only in spite of its barbarism, but oftentimes in mere virtue of its barbarism, we find a language claiming, by its eulogists, to possess more than ordinary powers of picturesque expression. Such a claim is continually put forward on behalf of the Celtic languages,—as, for instance, the Armoric, the Welsh, the Irish, the Manx, the Gaelic. Such a claim is put forward also for many oriental languages. Yet in most of these cases there is a profound mistake committed, and generally the same mistake. Without being strictly barbarous, all these languages are uncultured and rude in a degree corresponding to the narrow social development of the races who speak them. These races are precisely in that state of imperfect expansion,

both civilly and intellectually, under which the separation has not fully taken place between poetry and prose. Their social condition is too simple and elementary to require much cultivation of intellectual topics. Little motive exists for writing, unless on occasions of poetic excitement. The subdued colouring, therefore, of prose has not yet been (to speak physiologically) secreted. And the national diction has the appearance of being more energetic and sparkling simply because it is more inflated,—the chastities of good taste not having yet been called forth by social necessities to disentangle the separate forms of impassioned and non-impassioned composition. The Kalmuck Tartars, according to a German traveller, viz. Bergmann, long resident amongst them, speak in rapturous terms of their own language[1]; but it is probable that the particular modes of phraseology which fascinate their admiration are precisely those which a more advanced civilisation, and a corresponding development of taste, would reject as spurious. Certainly, in the case of a language and a literature likely to be much in advance of the Kalmuck,—viz. the Arabic at the era of Mahomet,—we find this conjecture realized. The Koran is held by the devout Mahommedan to be the most admirable model of composition; but exactly those ornaments of diction or of imagery which he regards as the jewels of the whole are most entirely in the childish taste of imperfect civilisation. That which attracts the Arab critic or the Persian is most of all repulsive to the masculine judgment of the European.

Barbarism, in short, through all degrees, generates its own barbaresque standards of taste, and nowhere so much as in the great field of diction and ornamental composition. A high civilisation is an indispensable condition for developing the full powers of a language; and it is equally a condition for developing the taste which must preside over the appreciation of diction and style. The elder civilisations of Egypt and of Asiatic empires are too imperfectly known at this day to furnish any suggestions upon the subject. The earliest

[1] For Bergmann and his acquaintance with the Kalmuck Tartars, and De Quincey's acquaintance with his book about them, see *ante*, Vol. VII, pp. 8-10.—M.

civilisation that offers a practical field of study to our own age is the superb one of Greece.

It cannot be necessary to say that from that memorable centre of intellectual activity have emanated the great models in art and literature which, to Christendom, when recasting her mediæval forms, became chiefly operative in controlling her luxuriance, and in other negative services, though not so powerful for positive impulse and inspiration. Greece was, in fact, *too* ebullient with intellectual activity—an activity too palestric and purely human—so that the opposite pole of the mind, which points to the mysterious and the spiritual, was, in the agile Greek, too intensely a child of the earth, starved and palsied; whilst in the Hebrew, dull and inert intellectually, but in his spiritual organs awake and sublime, the case was precisely reversed. Yet, after all, the result was immeasurably in favour of the Hebrew. Speaking in the deep sincerities of the solitary and musing heart, which refuses to be duped by the whistling of names, we must say of the Greek—*laudatur et alget*: he has won the admiration of the human race, he is numbered amongst the chief brilliancies of earth, but on the deeper and more abiding nature of man he has no hold. He will perish when any deluge of calamity overtakes the libraries of our planet, or if any great revolution of thought remoulds them, and will be remembered only as a generation of flowers is remembered; with the same tenderness of feeling, and with the same pathetic sense of a natural predestination to evanescence. Whereas the Hebrew, by introducing himself to the secret places of the human heart, and sitting there as incubator over the awful germs of the spiritualities that connect man with the unseen worlds, has perpetuated himself as a power in the human system: he is co-enduring with man's race, and careless of all revolutions in literature or in the composition of society. The very languages of these two races repeat the same expression of their intellectual differences, and of the differences in their missions. The Hebrew, meagre and sterile as regards the numerical wealth of its ideas, is infinite as regards their power; the Greek, on the other hand, rich as tropic forests in the polymorphous life, the life of the dividing and distinguishing intellect, is weak

only in the supreme region of thought. The Hebrew has scarcely any individuated words. Ask a Hebrew scholar if he has a word for a *ball* (as a tennis ball, *pila lusoria*); he says, "O yes." What is it then? Why, he gives you the word for *globe*. Ask for *orb*, for *sphere*, &c., still you have the same answer; the individual circumstantiations are swallowed up in the generic outline. But the Greek has a parity of wealth alike in the abstract and the concrete. Even as *vocal* languages, the Hebrew and the Greek obey the same prevailing law of difference. The Hebrew is a sublime monochord, uttering vague vowel sounds as indistinct and shy as the breathings of an Æolian harp when exposed to a fitful breeze. The Greek is more firmly articulated by consonants, and the succession of its syllables runs through a more extensive compass of sonorous variety than can be matched in any other known language. The Spanish and the Italian, with all the stateliness of their modulation, make no approach to the canorous *variety* of the sounds of the Greek.[1] Read a passage from almost any Greek poet, and each syllable seems to have been placed in its present position as a relief, and by way of contrast, to the syllable which follows and precedes.

Of a language thus and otherwise so divinely endowed the Greeks had a natural right to be proud. Yet *were* they so? There is no appearance of it: and the reason, no doubt, lay in their insulated position. Having no *intellectual* inter-

[1] The Romans discover something apparently of the same tendency to a vague economy of abstraction. But in *them* it is merely casual, and dependent on accidental ignorance. Thus, for instance, it is ridiculous to render the Catullian *Passer meæ puellæ* by *sparrow*. As well suppose Lesbia to have fondled a pet hedgehog. *Passer*, or *passerculus*, means *any* little bird whatever. The sternness of the Roman mind disdained to linger upon petty distinctions; or at least until the ages of luxurious refinement had paved the way for intellectual refinements. So, again, *malum*, or even *pomum*, does not mean an apple, but any whatever of the larger spherical or spheroidical fruits. A peach, indeed, was described differentially as *malum Persicum*; an apricot, had the Romans known it, would have been rendered by *malum apricum*, or *malum apricatum*; but an apple also, had it been mentioned with any stress of opposition or pointed distinction attached to it, would have been described differentially as *malum vulgare* or *malum domesticum*.

course with foreign nations, they had virtually no intercourse at all—none which could affect the feelings of the literary class, or generally of those who would be likely to contemplate language as a subject of æsthetic admiration. Each Hellenic author might be compared with others of his compatriot authors in respect to his management of their common language, but not the language itself compared as to structure or capacities with other languages; since these other languages (one and all) were in any practical sense hardly assumed to exist. In this there was no arrogance. Aliens, as to country and civil polity, being objects of jealousy in the circumstances of Greece, there could be no reason for abstaining from any designation, however hostile, which might seem appropriate to the relation between the parties. But, in reality, the term *barbarians*[1] seems, for many ages, to have implied nothing either hostile or disrespectful. By a natural *onomatopœia*, the Greeks used the iterated syllables *barbar* to denote that a man was unintelligible in his talk; and by the word *barbarian* originally it is probable that no sort of reproach was intended, but simply the fact that the people so called spoke a language not intelligible to Greeks. Latterly, the term seems to have been often used as one of mere convenience for classification, indicating the *non-Hellenes* in opposition to the *Hellenes*; and it was not meant to express any qualities whatever of the aliens — simply they were described as *being* aliens. But in the earliest times it was meant, by the word *barbarians*, to describe them under the idea of men who were ἑτερογλωττοι, men who, speaking in a tongue different from the Grecian, spoke unintelligibly; and at this day it is not impossible that the Chinese mean nothing more by the seemingly offensive term *outside barbarians*. The mis-translations must be many between ourselves and the Chinese; and the probability is that this reputedly arrogant expression means only "the aliens, or external people, who speak in tongues foreign to China." Arrogant or not arrogant, however, in the mouth of the Greeks, the word *barbarians* included the whole human race not living

[1] There is a short note by Gibbon upon this word; but it adds nothing to the suggestions which every thoughtful person will furnish to himself.

in Hellas, or in colonies thrown off from Hellas.[1] Having no temptation or facilities for holding any intellectual intercourse with those who could not communicate through the channel of the Greek language, it followed that the Greeks had no means or opportunity for comparing their own language with the languages of other nations; and together with this power of mutual comparison fell away the call and excitement to vanity upon that particular subject. Greece was in the absolute insulation of the phœnix, the unique of birds, that dies without having felt a throb of exultation or a pang of jealousy, because it has exposed its gorgeous plumage and the mysterious solemnities of its beauty only to the dusky recesses of Thebaic deserts.

Not thus were the Romans situated. The Greeks, so profound and immovable was their self-conceit, never in any generation came to regard the Romans with the slightest tremor of jealousy, as though they were or ever could be rivals in literature. The Roman nobles, as all Greece knew, resorted in youth to Athens as to the eternal well-head of learning and eloquence; and the literary or the forensic efforts of such persons were never viewed as by possibility efforts of competition with their masters, but simply as graceful expressions of homage to the inimitable by men whose rank gave a value to this homage. Cicero and other Romans of his day were egregiously duped by their own vanity when they received as sincere the sycophantic praises of mercenary Greek rhetoricians. No Greek ever in good faith admired a Roman upon intellectual grounds, except indeed as Polybius did, whose admiration was fixed upon the Roman institutions,

[1] In the later periods of Greek Literature, viz. at and after the era of Pericles, when the attention had been long pointed to language, and a more fastidious apprehension had been directed to its slighter shades of difference, the term "*barbarous*" was applied apparently to uncouth dialects of the Greek language itself. Thus, in the Ajax of Sophocles, Teucer (though certainly talking Greek) is described as speaking barbarously. Perhaps, however, the expression might bear a different construction. But in elder periods it seems hardly possible that the term *barbarous* could ever have been so used. Sir Edward B. Lytton, in his "Athens," supposes Homer, when describing the Carians by this term, to have meant no more than that they spoke some provincial variety of the Ionic Greek; but, applied to an age of so little refinement as the Homeric, I should scarcely think this interpretation admissible.

not upon their literature: though even in *his* day the Roman literature had already put forth a masculine promise, and in Plautus at least a promise of *unborrowed* excellence. The Greeks were wrong: the Romans had some things in their literature which a Greek could neither have rivalled nor even understood. They had a peculiar rhetoric for example, such as Ovid's in the contest for the arms of Achilles—such as Seneca's, which, to this hour, has never been properly examined, and which not only has no parallel in Grecian literature, but which, strangely enough, loses its whole effect and sense when translated into Greek: so entirely is it Roman by incommunicable privilege of genius.

But, if the Greeks did no justice to their Roman pupils, on the other hand, the Roman pupils never ceased to regard the Greeks with veneration, or to acknowledge them for their masters in literature: *they* had a foreign literature before their eyes challenging continual comparison; and this foreign literature was in a language which also challenged comparison with their own. Every Roman of distinction, after Sylla and Marius, understood Greek,—often talked it fluently, declaimed in it, and wrote books in it. But there is no language without its own peculiar genius, and therefore none without its separate powers and advantages. That the Latin language has in excess such an original character, and consequently such separate powers, Romans were not slow to discover. Studying the Greek so closely, they found by continual collation in what quarter lay the peculiar strength of the Latin. And, amongst others, Cicero did himself the greatest honour, and almost redeems the baseness of his political conduct, by the patriotic fervour which he now and then exhibits in defending the claims of his native language and native literature. He maintains, also, more than once, and perhaps with good reason, the native superiority of the Roman mind to the Grecian in certain qualities of racy humour, &c.[1]

[1] Where, by the way, the vocabulary of æsthetic terms, after all the labours of Ernesti and other German editors, is still far from being understood. In particular, the word *facetus* is so far from answering to its usual interpretation that *nostro periculo* let the reader understand it as precisely what the French mean by *naïve*.

Here, viz. in the case of Cicero, we have the first eminent example (though he himself records some elder examples amongst his own countrymen) of a man's standing up manfully to support the pretensions of his mother-tongue. And this might be done in a mere spirit of pugnacious defiance to the arrogance of another nation,—a spirit which finds matter of quarrel in a straw. But here also we find the first example of a statesman's seriously regarding a language in the light of a foremost jewel amongst the trophies of nationality.

Coming forward to our own times, we find sovereign rulers, on behalf of great nations, occasionally raising disputes which presume some weak sense of the value and dignity attached to a language. Cromwell, for instance, insisted upon Cardinal Mazarin's surrendering his pretension to have the French language used in a particular negotiation; and accordingly Latin was substituted.[1] But this did not argue in Cromwell any *real* estimation of the English language. He had been weak enough to wish that his own life and annals should be written in Latin rather than in English. The motive, it is true, might be to facilitate the circulation of the work amongst the literati of the Continent. But vernacular translations would more certainly have been executed all over the Continent in the absence of a Latin original; for this, by meeting the demand of foreigners in part (viz. of *learned* foreigners), would *pro tanto* have lessened the motives to such translations. And, apart from this preference of a Latin to a domestic portraiture addressing itself originally to his own countrymen, or, if Latin were otherwise the preferable language, apart from Cromwell's preference of a Latin Casaubon[2] to a Latin Milton, in no instance did Cromwell testify any sense of the commanding rank due to English Literature amongst the contemporary[3]

[1] Latin had been adopted as the language for the foreign correspondence of the English Commonwealth from its institution in 1649; and Milton, as secretary for the foreign correspondence of the Commonwealth Government, and then of Cromwell, was known indifferently as the Foreign Secretary or the Latin Secretary.—M.

[2] Meric Casaubon (1599-1671), though by birth a Genevese, was for most of his life resident in England.—M.

[3] At this era, when Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspere, and the contemporary dramatists, when Lord Bacon, Selden, Milton, and many of

Literatures of Christendom, nor any concern for its extension.

In the case of resisting the French arrogance, Cromwell had seemed to express homage to the language of his country, but in reality he had only regarded the political dignity of his country. A pretension may be lighter than a feather; and yet in behalf of our country we do right to suffer no insolent aggression upon it by an enemy. But this argues no sincere regard for that feather on its own account. We have known a sailor to knock an Italian down for speaking disrespectfully of English tenor voices. The true and appropriate expression of reverence to a language is not by fighting for it as a subject of national rivalry, but, by taking earnest pains to write it with accuracy, practically to display its beauty, and to make its powers available for commensurate ends. Tried by this test, which of the three peoples that walk at the head of civilization—French, Germans, or English—have best fulfilled the duties of their position?

To answer that the French only have been fully awake to these duties is painful, but too manifestly it is true. The French language possesses the very highest degree of merit, though not in the very highest mode of merit; it is the unique language of the planet as an instrument for giving effect to the powers, and for meeting the necessities, of social gaiety and colloquial intercourse. This is partly the effect, and partly the cause, of the social temperament which distinguishes the French: partly follows the national disposition, and partly leads to it. The adaptation of the language to the people, not perhaps more really prominent in this case

the leading English theologians (Jewel, Hooker, Chillingworth, and Jeremy Taylor), had appeared—in fact, all the *optimates* of the English Literature—it must be remembered that the French Literature was barely beginning. Montaigne was the only *deceased* author of eminence; Corneille was the only living author in general credit. The reader may urge that already, in the times of Catherine de Medici, there were eminent poets. In the reign of her son Charles IX were several; and in the reign of her husband there was even a celebrated *Pleiad* of poets. But these were merely *court* poets; they had no national name or life, and were already forgotten in the days of Louis XIII. As to German Literature, *that* was a blank. Germany had then but one tolerable poet, viz. Opitz, whom some people (chiefly his countrymen) honour with the title of the German Dryden!

than in others, is more conspicuously so ; and it may be in a spirit of gratitude for this genial co-operation in their language that the French are in a memorable degree anxious to write it with elegance and correctness. They take a pride in doing so ; and it is remarkable that grammatical inaccuracies, so common amongst ourselves, and common even amongst our literary people, are almost unknown amongst the educated French.[1]

But mere fidelity to grammar would leave a *negative* impression : the respect which the French show to their language expresses itself chiefly in their way of managing it,—that is, in their attention to style and diction. It is the rarest thing possible to find a French writer erring by sentences too long, too intricate and loaded with clauses, or too clumsy in their structure. The very highest qualities of style are not much within the ideal of French composition ; but in the executive results French prose composition usually reveals an air of finish, of self-restraint under any possible temptation to *des longueurs*, and of graceful adroitness in the transitions.

Precisely the reverse of all this is found in the compositions of the German ; who is the greatest nuisance, in what concerns the treatment of language, that the mind of man is capable of conceiving. Of his language the German is proud, and with reason, for it is redundantly rich. Even in

[1] This the reader might be apt to doubt, if he were to judge of French grammar by French orthography. Until recently—that is, through the last thirty years—very few people in France, even of the educated classes, could spell. They spelt by procuration. The compositors of the press held a general power-of-attorney to spell for universal France. A *facsimile* of the spelling which prevailed amongst the royal family of France at the time of the elder Revolution is given in Cléry's Journal : it is terrific. Such forms occur, for instance, as *J'avoient* (J'avois) for *I had* : *J'été* (étois) for *I was*. But, in publishing such facts, the reader is not to imagine that Cléry meant to expose anything needing concealment. All people of distinction spelled in that lawless way ; and the loyal valet doubtless no more thought it decorous for a man of rank to spell his own spelling than to clean his own shoes or to wash his own linen. "Base is the man that pays," says Ancient Pistol ; "Base is the man that spells," said the French of that century. It would have been vulgar to spell decently ; and it was not illiterate to spell abominably ; for literary men spelled not at all better ; they also spelled by proxy, and by grace of compositors.

its Teutonic section, it is *so* rich as to be self-sufficing, and capable, though awkwardly, of dispensing with the Greek and Latin counter-section. This independence of alien resources has sometimes been even practically adopted as the basis of a dictionary, and officially patronized by adoption in the public *bureaus*. Some thirty years ago the Prussian government was said to have introduced into the public service a dictionary[1] which rejected all words not purely vernacular. Such a word, for instance, as *philosophie* was not admissible; the indigenous word *weltweisheit* was held to be not only sufficient, which it really *is*, but exclusively legitimate. Yet, with all this scrupulosity and purism of veneration for his native language,—to which he ascribes *every* quality of power and beauty, and amongst others—*credite posteri!*—sometimes even *vocal* beauty[2] and euphony,—the true German has no sense of grace or deformity in the management of his language. Style, diction, the construction of sentences, are ideas perfectly without meaning to the German writer. If a whole book were made up of a single sentence, all collateral or subordinate ideas being packed into it as parenthetical intercalations,—if this single sentence should even cover an acre of ground,—the true German would see in all *that* no want of art, would recognise no opportunities thrown away for the display of beauty. The temple would in *his* eyes exist, because the materials of the temple—the stone, the lime, the iron, the timber—had been carted to the ground. A sentence, even when insulated and viewed apart for itself, is a subject for complex art: even *so* far it is capable of multiform beauty, and liable to a whole *nosology* of malconformations. But it is in the *relation* of sentences, in what Horace terms their "*junctura*," that the true life of composition resides. The

[1] By Heinze, if I recollect; and founded partly on that of Wolf.

[2] Foreigners do not often go so far as this; and yet an American, in his "Sketches of Turkey" (New York, 1833), characterizes the German (p. 478) not only as a soft and melodious language, but absolutely as "the *softest* of all European languages." Schiller and Goethe had a notion that it was capable of being hammered into euphony, that it was by possibility malleable in that respect, but then only by great labour of selection, and as a trick of rope-dancing ingenuity.

mode of their *nexus*, the way in which one sentence is made to arise out of another, and to prepare the opening for a third: this is the great loom in which the textile process of the moving intellect reveals itself and prospers. Here the separate clauses of a period become architectural parts, aiding, relieving, supporting each other. But how can any approach to that effect, or any suggestion of it, exist for him who hides and buries all openings for parts and graceful correspondences in one monotonous continuity of period, stretching over three octavo pages? Kant was a great man, but he was obtuse and deaf as an antediluvian boulder with regard to language and its capacities. He has sentences which have been measured by a carpenter, and some of them run two feet eight by six inches. Now, a sentence with that enormous span is fit only for the use of a megatherium or a pre-Adamite. Parts so remote as the beginning and the end of such a sentence can have no sensible relation to each other: not much as regards their logic, but none at all as regards their more *sensuous* qualities—rhythmus, for instance, or the continuity of metaphor. And it is clear that, if the internal relations of a sentence fade under the extravagant misproportion of its scale, *a fortiori* must the outer relations. If two figures, or other objects, are meant to modify each other visually by means of colour, of outline, or of expression, they must be brought into juxtaposition, or at least into neighbourhood. A chasm between them, so vast as to prevent the synthesis of the two objects in one co-existing field of vision, interrupts the play of all genial comparison. Periods, and clauses of periods, modify each other, and build up a whole then only when the parts are shown *as* parts, cohering and conspiring to a common result. But, if each part is separately so vast as to eclipse the disc of the adjacent parts, then substantially they are separate wholes, and do not coalesce to any joint or complex impression.

We English in this matter occupy a middle position between the French and the Germans. Agreeably to the general cast of the national character, our tendency is to degrade the value of the ornamental, whenever it is brought before us under any suggestion of comparison or rivalry with the substantial or grossly useful. Viewing the thoughts as

the substantial objects in a book, we are apt to regard the manner of presenting these thoughts as a secondary or even trivial concern. The one we typify as the metallic substance, the silver or gold, which constitutes the true value that cannot perish in a service of plate; whereas the style too generally, in *our* estimate, represents the mere casual fashion given to the plate by the artist—an adjunct that any change of public taste may degrade into a positive disadvantage. But in this we English err greatly; and by these three capital oversights:—

1. It is certain that style, or (to speak by the most general expression) the management of language, ranks amongst the fine arts, and is able therefore to yield a separate intellectual pleasure quite apart from the interest of the subject treated. So far it is already one error to rate the value of style as if it were necessarily a secondary or subordinate thing. On the contrary, style has an *absolute* value, like the product of any other exquisite art, quite distinct from the value of the subject about which it is employed, and irrelatively to the subject; precisely as the fine workmanship of Scopas the Greek, or of Cellini the Florentine, is equally valued by the connoisseur, whether embodied in bronze or marble, in an ivory or a golden vase. But

2. If we *do* submit to this narrow valuation of style, founded on the interest of the subject to which it is ministerial, still, even on that basis, we English commit a capital blunder which the French earnestly and sincerely escape; for, assuming that the thoughts involve the primary interest, still it must make all the difference in the world to the success of those thoughts whether they are treated in the way best fitted to expel the doubts or darkness that may have settled upon them, and, secondly, in cases where the business is not to establish new convictions, but to carry old convictions into operative life and power, whether they are treated in the way best fitted to rekindle in the mind a practical sense of their value. Style has two separate functions: first, to brighten the *intelligibility* of a subject which is obscure to the understanding; secondly, to regenerate the normal *power* and impressiveness of a subject which has

become dormant to the sensibilities. Darkness gathers upon many a theme, sometimes from previous mistreatment, but oftener from original perplexities investing its very nature. Upon the style it is, if we take that word in its largest sense,—upon the skill and art of the developer,—that these perplexities greatly depend for their illumination. Look, again, at the other class of cases, when the difficulties are not for the understanding but for the practical sensibilities as applicable to the services of life. The subject, suppose, is already understood sufficiently; but it is lifeless as a motive. It is not new light that is to be communicated, but old torpor that is to be dispersed. The writer is not summoned to convince, but to persuade. Decaying lineaments are to be retraced, and faded colouring to be refreshed. Now, these offices of style are really not essentially below the level of those other offices attached to the original *discovery* of truth. He that to an old conviction, long since inoperative and dead, gives the regeneration that carries it back into the heart as a vital power of action—he, again, that by new light, or by light trained to flow through a new channel, reconciles to the understanding a truth which hitherto had seemed dark or doubtful—both these men are really, *quoad* us that benefit by their services, the *discoverers* of the truth. Yet these results are amongst the possible gifts of style. Light to *see* the road, power to *advance along* it—such being amongst the promises and proper functions of style, it is a capital error, under the idea of its ministeriality, to undervalue this great organ of the advancing intellect—an organ which is equally important considered as a tool for the culture and *popularization* of truth and also (if it had no use at all in that way) as a mode *per se* of the beautiful and a fountain of intellectual pleasure. The vice of that appreciation which we English apply to style lies in representing it as a mere ornamental accident of written composition—a trivial embellishment, like the mouldings of furniture, the cornices of ceilings, or the arabesques of tea-urns. On the contrary, it is a product of art the rarest, subtlest, and most intellectual; and, like other products of the fine arts, it is then finest when it is most eminently disinterested—that is, most conspicuously detached from gross palpable uses. Yet, in very many cases,

it really *has* the obvious uses of that gross palpable order; as in the cases just noticed, when it gives light to the understanding, or power to the will, removing obscurities from one set of truths, and into another circulating the life-blood of sensibility. In these cases, meantime, the style is contemplated as a thing separable from the thoughts; in fact, as the *dress* of the thoughts—a robe that may be laid aside at pleasure. But

3. There arises a case entirely different, where style cannot be regarded as a *dress* or alien covering, but where style becomes the *incarnation* of the thoughts. The human body is not the dress or apparel of the human spirit: far more mysterious is the mode of their union. Call the two elements A and B; then it is impossible to point out A as existing aloof from B, or *vice versa*. A exists in and through B; B exists in and through A. No profound observer can have failed to observe this illustrated in the capacities of style. Imagery is sometimes not the mere alien apparelling of a thought, and of a nature to be detached from the thought, but is the coefficient that, being superadded to something else, absolutely *makes* the thought as a *third* and separate existence.

In this third case, our English tendency to undervalue style goes more deeply into error than in the other two. In those two we simply underrate the enormous services that are or might be rendered by style to the interests of truth and human thinking; but in the third case we go near to abolish a mode of existence. This is not so impossible an offence as might be supposed. There are many ideas in Leibnitz, in Kant, in the schoolmen, in Plato at times, and certainly in Aristotle (as the ideas of antiperistasis, entelecheia, &c.), which are only to be arrested and realized by a signal *effort*—by a struggle and a *nisus* both of reflection and of large combination. Now, where so much depends upon an effort—on a spasmodic strain,—to fail by a hair's breadth is to collapse. For instance, the idea involved in the word transcendental,[1] as used in the critical philosophy, illustrates the metaphysical relations of style.

[1] "*Transcendental*": —Kant, who was the most sincere, honourable, and truthful of human beings, always understood himself. He

hated tricks, disguises, or mystifications, simulation equally with dissimulation: and his love of the English was built avowedly on their *veracity*. So far he has an extra chance of intelligibility. On the other hand, of all men, he had the least talent for explaining himself, or communicating his views to others. Whenever Kant undertakes to render into popular language the secrets of metaphysics, one inevitably thinks of Bardolph's attempt to analyse and justify the word *accommodation*: —"*Accommodation*—that is, when a man is (as they say) accommodated; or when a man is being whereby he may be thought to be accommodated, which is an excellent thing." There are sometimes Eleusinian mysteries, sealed by nature herself, the mighty mother, as *aporreta*, things essentially ineffable and unutterable in vulgar ears. Long, for instance, he laboured, but vainly he laboured, to render intelligible the scholastic idea of the transcendental. This should have been easy to deal with; for, on the one side lay the *transcendent*, on the other the *immanent*, two buoys to map out the channel; and yet did Kant, throughout his long life, fail to satisfy any one man who was not previously and independently in possession of the idea. Difficulties of this nature should seem as little related to artifice of style and diction as geometrical difficulties; and yet it is certain that, by throwing the stress and emphasis of the perplexity upon the exact verbal *nodus* of the problem, a better structure of his sentences would have guided Kant to a readier apprehension of the real shape which the difficulty assumed to the ordinary student.

CONVERSATION [1]

Amongst the arts connected with the *elegancies* of social life in a degree which nobody denies is the Art of Conversation; but in a degree which almost everybody denies, if one may judge by their neglect of its simple rules, this same art is not less connected with the *uses* of social life. Neither the luxury of conversation, nor the possible benefit of conversation, is to be found under that rude administration of it which generally prevails. Without an art, without some simple system of rules, gathered from experience of such contingencies as are most likely to mislead the practice when left to its own guidance, no act of man nor effort accomplishes its purposes in perfection. The sagacious Greek would not so much as drink a glass of wine amongst a few friends without a systematic art to guide him, and a regular form of polity to control him,—which art and which polity (begging Plato's pardon) were better than any of more ambitious aim in his Republic. Every *symposium* had its set of rules, and rigorous they were; had its own *symposiarch* to govern it, and a tyrant he was. Elected democratically, he became, when once installed, an autocrat not less despotic than the King of Persia. Purposes still more slight and fugitive have been organized into arts. Taking soup gracefully, under the difficulties opposed to it by a dinner dress at that time fashionable, was reared into an art about forty-

[1] First published in *Tait's Magazine* for October 1847: reprinted, with considerable enlargements, in 1860, in the fourteenth or posthumous volume of De Quincey's Edition of his Collective Writings. —M.

five years ago by a Frenchman who lectured upon it to ladies in London; and the most brilliant duchess of that day, viz. the Duchess of Devonshire, was amongst his best pupils. Spitting, if the reader will pardon the mention of so gross a fact, was shown to be a very difficult art, and publicly prelected upon, about the same time in the same great capital. The professors in this faculty were the hackney-coachmen; the pupils were gentlemen, who paid a guinea each for three lessons; the chief problem in this system of hydraulics being to throw the salivating column in a parabolic curve from the centre of Parliament Street, when driving four-in-hand, to the foot pavements, right and left, so as to alarm the consciences of guilty peripatetics on either side. The ultimate problem, which closed the *curriculum* of study, was held to lie in spitting round a corner; when *that* was mastered, the pupil was entitled to his doctor's degree. Endless are the purposes of man, merely festal or merely comic, and aiming but at the momentary life of a cloud, which have earned for themselves the distinction and apparatus of a separate art. Yet for conversation, the great paramount purpose of social meetings, no art exists or has been attempted.

That seems strange, but is not really so. A limited process submits readily to the limits of a technical system; but a process so unlimited as the interchange of thought seems to reject them. And, even if an art of conversation were less unlimited, the means of carrying such an art into practical effect amongst so vast a variety of minds seems wanting. Yet again, perhaps, after all, this may rest on a mistake. What we begin by misjudging is the particular phasis of conversation which brings it under the control of art and discipline. It is not in its relation to the intellect that conversation ever has been improved or *will* be improved primarily, but in its relation to manners. Has a man ever mixed with what in technical phrase is called "good company," meaning company in the highest degree polished,—company which (being or *not* being aristocratic as respects its composition) is aristocratic as respects the standard of its manners and usages? If he really *has*, and does not deceive himself from vanity or from pure inacquaintance

with the world, in that case he must have remarked the large effect impressed upon the grace and upon the freedom of conversation by a few simple instincts of real good breeding. Good breeding—what is it? There is no need in this place to answer that question comprehensively ; it is sufficient to say that it is made up chiefly of *negative* elements,—that it shows itself far less in what it prescribes than in what it forbids. Now, even under this limitation of the idea, the truth is that more will be done for the benefit of conversation by the simple magic of good manners (that is, chiefly by a system of forbearances), applied to the besetting vices of social intercourse, than ever *was* or *can* be done by all varieties of intellectual power assembled upon the same arena. Intellectual graces of the highest order may perish and confound each other when exercised in a spirit of ill-temper, or under the licence of bad manners ; whereas very humble powers, when allowed to expand themselves colloquially in that genial freedom which is possible only under the most absolute confidence in the self-restraint of your collocutors, accomplish their purpose to a certainty if it be the ordinary purpose of liberal amusement, and have a chance of accomplishing it even when this purpose is the more ambitious one of communicating knowledge or exchanging new views upon truth.

In my own early years, having been formed by nature too exclusively and morbidly for solitary thinking, I observed nothing. Seeming to have eyes, in reality I saw nothing. But it is a matter of no very uncommon experience that, whilst the mere observers never became meditators, the mere meditators, on the other hand, may finally ripen into close observers. Strength of thinking, through long years, upon innumerable themes, will have the effect of disclosing a vast variety of questions, to which it soon becomes apparent that answers are lurking up and down the whole field of daily experience ; and thus an external experience which was slighted in youth, because it was a dark cipher that could be read into no meaning, a key that answered to no lock, gradually becomes interesting as it is found to yield one solution after another to problems that have independently matured in the mind. Thus, for in-

stance, upon the special functions of conversation, upon its powers, its laws, its ordinary diseases, and their appropriate remedies, in youth I never bestowed a thought or a care. I viewed it not as one amongst the gay ornamental arts of the intellect, but as one amongst the dull necessities of business. Loving solitude too much, I understood the capacities of colloquial intercourse too little. And thus it is, though not for *my* reason, that most people estimate the intellectual relations of conversation. Let these, however, be what they may, one thing seemed undeniable—that this world talked a great deal too much. It would be better for all parties if nine in every ten of the *winged words* flying about in this world (Homer's *epea pteroenta*) had their feathers clipped amongst men,—or even amongst women, who have a right to a larger allowance of words. Yet, as it was quite out of my power to persuade the world into any such self-denying reformation, it seemed equally out of the line of my duties to nourish any moral anxiety in that direction. *To talk* seemed to me at that time in the same category as *to sleep*,—not an accomplishment, but a base physical infirmity. As a moralist, I really was culpably careless upon the whole subject. I cared as little what absurdities men practised in their vast tennis-courts of conversation, where the ball is flying backwards and forwards to no purpose for ever, as what tricks Englishmen might play with their monstrous national debt. Yet at length what I disregarded on any principle of moral usefulness I came to make an object of the profoundest interest on principles of art. *Betting*, in like manner, and *wagering*,—which apparently had no moral value, and for that reason had been always slighted as inconsiderable arts (though, by the way, they always had one valuable use, viz. that of evading quarrels, since a bet summarily intercepts an altercation),—rose suddenly into a philosophic rank when, successively, Huygens, the Bernoullis, and De Moivre were led by the suggestion of these trivial practices amongst men to throw the light of a high mathematical analysis upon the whole doctrine of Chances.[1] Lord Bacon had been led to remark

[1] Huygens, 1629-1695; James Bernoulli, 1654-1705; John Bernoulli, 1667-1748; De Moivre, 1667-1754.

the capacities of conversation as an organ for sharpening one particular mode of intellectual power.[1] Circumstances, on the other hand, led me into remarking the special capacities of conversation as an organ for absolutely creating another mode of power. Let a man have read, thought, studied, as much as he may, rarely will he reach his possible advantages as a *ready* man, unless he has exercised his powers much in conversation: that, I think, was Lord Bacon's idea. Now, this wise and useful remark points in a direction not objective, but subjective; that is, it does not promise any absolute extension to truth itself, but only some greater facilities to the man who expounds or diffuses the truth. Nothing will be done for truth objectively that would not at any rate be done; but subjectively it will be done with more fluency, and at less cost of exertion to the doer. On the contrary, my own growing reveries on the latent powers of conversation (which, though a thing that then I hated, yet challenged at times unavoidably my attention) pointed to an absolute birth of new insight into the truth itself as inseparable from the finer and more scientific exercise of the talking art. It would not be the brilliancy, the ease, or the adroitness of the expounder that would benefit, but the absolute interests of the thing expounded. A feeling dawned on me of a secret magic lurking in the peculiar life, velocities, and contagious ardour of conversation, quite separate from any which belonged to books,—arming a man with new forces, and not merely with a new dexterity in wielding the old ones. I felt (and in this I could not be mistaken, as too certainly it was a fact of my own experience) that in the electric kindling of life between two minds,—and far less

[1] "Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and "writing an exact man,"—is Bacon's well-known saying in his essay *Of Studies*; but in his essay *Of Friendship* he discusses the benefits of "conference" or conversation more at large, thus:—"Certain it "is that, whosoever hath his mind fraught with many thoughts, his "wits and understanding do clarify and break up in the communicating "and discussing with another: he tosseth his thoughts more easily; "he marshalleth them more orderly; he seeth how they look when "they are turned into words; finally, he waxeth wiser than himself, "and that more by an hour's discourse than by a day's meditation. ". . . In a word, a man were better relate himself to a statua or "picture than to suffer his thoughts to pass in smother."—M.

from the kindling natural to conflict (though *that* also is something) than from the kindling through sympathy with the object discussed in its momentary coruscation of shifting phases,—there sometimes arise glimpses and shy revelations of affinity, suggestion, relation, analogy, that could not have been approached through any avenues of methodical study. Great organists find the same effect of inspiration, the same result of power creative and revealing, in the mere movement and velocity of their own voluntaries. Like the heavenly wheels of Milton, throwing off fiery flakes and bickering flames, these *impromptu* torrents of music create rapturous *fioriture*, beyond all capacity in the artist to register, or afterwards to imitate. The reader must be well aware that many philosophic instances exist where a change in the degree makes a change in the kind. Usually this is otherwise; the prevailing rule is that the principle subsists unaffected by any possible variation in the amount or degree of the force. But a large class of exceptions must have met the reader,—though, from want of a pencil, he has improperly omitted to write them down in his pocket-book,—cases, viz., where, upon passing beyond a certain point in the graduation, an alteration takes place suddenly in the *kind* of effect, a new direction is given to the power. Some illustration of this truth occurs in conversation, where a velocity in the movement of thought is made possible (and often natural) greater than ever can arise in methodical books, and where, 2*dly*, approximations are more obvious and easily effected between things too remote for a steadier contemplation.

One remarkable evidence of a *specific* power lying hid in conversation may be seen in such writings as have moved by impulses most nearly resembling those of conversation,—for instance, in those of Edmund Burke. For one moment, reader, pause upon the spectacle of two contrasted intellects, Burke's and Johnson's: one an intellect essentially going forward, governed by the very necessity of growth, by the law of motion in advance; the latter essentially an intellect retrogressive, retrospective, and throwing itself back on its own steps. This original difference was aided accidentally in Burke by the tendencies of political partisanship,—which,

both from moving amongst moving things and uncertainties, as compared with the more stationary aspects of moral philosophy, and also from its more fluctuating and fiery passions, must unavoidably reflect in greater life the tumultuary character of conversation. The result from these original differences of intellectual constitution, aided by these secondary differences of pursuit, is, that Dr. Johnson never, in any instance, GROWS a truth before your eyes whilst in the act of delivering it or moving towards it. All that he offers up to the end of the chapter he had when he began. But to Burke, such was the prodigious elasticity of his thinking, equally in his conversation and in his writings, the mere act of movement became the principle or cause of movement. Motion propagated motion, and life threw off life. The very violence of a projectile as thrown by *him* caused it to rebound in fresh forms, fresh angles, splintering, coruscating, which gave out thoughts as new (and as startling) to himself as they are to his reader. In this power, which might be illustrated largely from the writings of Burke, is seen something allied to the powers of a prophetic seer, who is compelled oftentimes into seeing things as unexpected by himself as by others. Now, in conversation, considered as to its *tendencies* and capacities, there sleeps an intermitting spring of such sudden revelation, showing much of the same general character,—a power putting on a character *essentially* differing from the character worn by the power of books.

If, then, in the *colloquial* commerce of thought there lurked a power not shared by other modes of that great commerce, a power separate and *sui generis*, next it was apparent that a great art must exist somewhere applicable to this power,—not in the Pyramids, or in the tombs of Thebes, but in the unwrought quarries of men's minds, so many and so dark. There was an art missing. If an art, then an artist was missing. If the art (as we say of foreign mails) were "due," then the artist was "due." How happened it that this great man never made his appearance? But perhaps he *had*. Many persons think Dr. Johnson the *exemplar* of conversational power. I think otherwise, for reasons which I shall soon explain; and far sooner I should look for such an *exemplar* in Burke. But neither Johnson

nor Burke, however they might rank as *powers*, was the *artist* that I demanded. Burke valued not at all the reputation of a great performer in conversation; he scarcely contemplated the skill as having a real existence; and a man will never be an artist who does not value his art, or even recognise it as an object distinctly defined. Johnson, again, relied sturdily upon his natural powers for carrying him aggressively through all conversational occasions or difficulties that English society, from its known character and composition, could be supposed likely to bring forward, without caring for any art or system of rules that might give further effect to that power. If a man is strong enough to knock down ninety-nine in a hundred of all antagonists in spite of any advantages as to pugilistic science which they may possess over himself, he is not likely to care for the improbable case of a hundredth man appearing with strength equal to his own superadded to the utmost excess of that artificial skill which is wanting in himself. Against such a contingency it is not worth while going to the cost of a regular pugilistic training. Half a century might not bring up a case of actual call for its application. Or, if it did, for a single *extra* case of that nature there would always be a resource in the *extra* (and, strictly speaking, foul) arts of kicking, scratching, pinching, and tearing hair.

The conversational powers of Johnson were narrow in compass, however strong within their own essential limits. As a *conditio sine qua non*, he did not absolutely demand a *personal* contradictor by way of "stoker" to supply fuel and keep up his steam; but he demanded at least a *subject* teeming with elements of known contradictory opinion, whether linked to partisanship or not. His views of all things tended to negation, never to the positive and the creative. Hence may be explained a fact which cannot have escaped any keen observer of those huge Johnsonian *memorabilia* which we possess,—viz. that the gyration of his flight upon any one question that ever came before him was so exceedingly brief. There was no process, no evolution, no movement of self-conflict or preparation: a word, a distinction, a pointed antithesis, and, above all, a new abstraction of the logic involved in some popular fallacy, or doubt, or prejudice, or

problem, formed the utmost of his efforts. He dissipated some casual perplexity that had gathered in the eddies of conversation, but he contributed nothing to any weightier interest; he unchoked a strangulated sewer in some blind alley, but what river is there that felt his cleansing power? There is no man that can cite any single error which Dr. Johnson unmasked, or any important truth which he expanded. Nor is this extraordinary. Dr. Johnson had not within himself the fountain of such power, having not a brooding or naturally philosophic intellect. Philosophy in any acquired sense he had none. How else could it have happened that upon David Hartley, upon David Hume, upon Voltaire, upon Rousseau,—the true or the false philosophy of his own day,—beyond a personal sneer, founded on some popular slander, he had nothing to say and said nothing? A new world was moulding itself in Dr. Johnson's meridian hours; new generations were ascending, and "other palms were won." Yet of all this the Doctor suspected nothing. Countrymen and contemporaries of the Doctor's, brilliant men, but (as many think) trifling men, such as Horace Walpole and Lord Chesterfield, already in the middle of that eighteenth century could read the signs of the great changes advancing. Already they started in horror from the portents which rose before them in Paris like the procession of regal phantoms before Macbeth, and have left in their letters records undeniable (such as now read like Cassandra prophecies) that already they had noticed tremors in the ground below their feet, and sounds in the air, running before the great convulsions under which Europe was destined to rock full thirty years later. Many instances during the last war showed us that in the frivolous dandy might often lurk the most fiery and accomplished of *aides-de-camp*; and these cases show that men in whom the world sees only elegant *roués*, sometimes from carelessness, sometimes from want of opening for display, conceal qualities of penetrating sagacity, and a learned spirit of observation, such as may be looked for vainly in persons of more solemn and academic pretension. But there was a greater defect in Dr. Johnson for purposes of conversation than merely want of eye for the social phenomena rising around him. He had

no eye for such phenomena, because he had a somnolent want of interest in them; and why? Because he had little interest in man. Having no sympathy with human nature in its struggles, or faith in the progress of man, he could not be supposed to regard with much interest any forerunning symptoms of changes that to him were themselves indifferent. And the reason that he felt thus careless was the desponding taint in his blood. It is good to be of a melancholic temperament, as all the ancient physiologists held, but only if the melancholy is balanced by fiery aspiring qualities,—not when it gravitates essentially to the earth. Hence the drooping, desponding character, and the monotony, of the estimate which Dr. Johnson applied to life. We are all, in *his* view, miserable, scrofulous wretches; the "strumous diathesis" was developed in our flesh, or soon would be; and, but for his piety,—which was the best indication of some greatness latent within him,—he would have suggested to all mankind a nobler use for garters than any which regarded knees. In fact I believe that, but for his piety, he would not only have counselled hanging in general, but hanged himself in particular. Now, this gloomy temperament, not as an occasional but as a permanent state, is fatal to the power of brilliant conversation, in so far as that power rests upon raising a continual succession of topics, and not merely using with lifeless talent the topics offered by others. Man is the central interest about which revolve all the fleeting phenomena of life; these secondary interests demand the first; and, with the little knowledge about them which must follow from little care about them, there can be no salient fountain of conversational themes. "*Pectus*," says Quintilian, "*id est quod disertum facit*":—*The heart* (and not the brain) *is that which makes a man eloquent.* From the heart, from an interest of love or hatred, of hope or care, springs all permanent eloquence; and the elastic spring of conversation is gone if the talker is a mere showy man of talent, pulling at an oar which he detests.

What an index might be drawn up of subjects interesting to human nature, and suggested by the events of the Johnsonian period, upon which the Doctor ought to have talked, and must have talked if his interest in man had

been catholic, but on which the Doctor is not recorded to have uttered one word! Visiting Paris once in his whole life, he applied himself diligently to the measuring of—what? Of gilt mouldings and diapered panels! Yet books, it will be said, suggest topics as well as life and the moving sceneries of life; and surely Dr. Johnson had *this* fund to draw upon? No; for, though he had read much in a desultory way, he had studied nothing[1]; and without that sort of systematic reading, it is but a rare chance that books can be brought to bear effectually, and yet indirectly, upon conversation; whilst to make them directly and formally the subjects of discussion, presupposes either a learned audience, or, if the audience is not so, much pedantry and much arrogance in the talker.[2]

The flight of our human hours, not really more rapid at any one moment than another, yet oftentimes to our feelings *seems* more rapid; and this flight startles us like guilty things with a more affecting *sense* of its rapidity when a distant church-clock strikes in the night-time, or when, upon some solemn summer evening, the sun's disc, after settling for a minute with farewell horizontal rays, suddenly drops out of sight. The record of our loss in such a case seems to us the first intimation of its possibility,—as if we could not be made sensible that the hours were perishable until it is announced to us that already they have perished. We feel a perplexity of distress when that which seems to us the cruellest of injuries, a robbery committed upon our dearest possession by the conspiracy of the world outside, seems also as in part a robbery sanctioned by our own collusion.

[1] "*Had studied nothing*":—It may be doubted whether Dr. Johnson understood any one thing thoroughly except Latin: not that he understood even *that* with the elaborate and circumstantial accuracy required for the editing critically of a Latin classic. But, if he had less than *that*, he also had more: he *possessed* that language in a way that no extent of mere critical knowledge could confer. He wrote it genially, not as one translating into it painfully from English, but as one using it for his original organ of thinking. And in Latin verse he expressed himself at times with the energy and freedom of a Roman. With Greek his acquaintance was far more slender.

[2] The original article in *Tait's Magazine* for October 1847 stopped here: what follows is subsequent addition.—M.

The world, and the customs of the world, never cease to levy taxes upon our time: that is true, and so far the blame is not ours; but the particular *degree* in which we suffer by this robbery depends much upon the weakness with which we ourselves become parties to the wrong, or the energy with which we resist it. Resisting or not, however, we are doomed to suffer a bitter pang as often as the irrecoverable flight of our time is brought home with keenness to our hearts. The spectacle of a lady floating over the sea in a boat, and waking suddenly from sleep to find her magnificent ropes of pearl-necklace by some accident detached at one end from its fastenings, the loose string hanging down into the water, and pearl after pearl slipping off for ever into the abyss, brings before us the sadness of the case. That particular pearl which at the very moment is rolling off into the unsearchable deeps carries its own separate reproach to the lady's heart. But it is more deeply reproachful as the representative of so many others, uncounted pearls, that have already been swallowed up irrecoverably whilst she was yet sleeping, and of many beside that must follow before any remedy can be applied to what we may call this jewelly hæmorrhage. A constant hæmorrhage of the same kind is wasting our jewelly hours. A day has perished from our brief calendar of days: and *that* we could endure; but this day is no more than the reiteration of many other days,—days counted by thousands,—that have perished to the same extent and by the same unhappy means, viz. the evil usages of the world made effectual and ratified by our own *lâcheté*. Bitter is the upbraiding which we seem to hear from a secret monitor—"My friend, you make very free with your days: pray, how many do you expect to have? What is your rental, as regards the total harvest of days which this life is likely to yield?" Let us consider. Threescore years and ten produce a total sum of 25,550 days,—to say nothing of some seventeen or eighteen more that will be payable to you as a *bonus* on account of leap years. Now, out of this total, one-third must be deducted at a blow for a single item, viz. sleep. Next, on account of illness, of recreation, and the serious occupations spread over the surface of life, it will be little enough to deduct another third. Recollect also that

twenty years will have gone from the earlier end of your life (viz. above seven thousand days) before you can have attained any skill or system, or any definite purpose in the distribution of your time. Lastly, for that single item which amongst the Roman armies was indicated by the technical phrase "*corpus curare*,"—tendance on the animal necessities, viz. eating, drinking, washing, bathing, and exercise,—deduct the smallest allowance consistent with propriety; and, upon summing up all these appropriations, you will not find so much as four thousand days left disposable for direct intellectual culture. Four thousand, or forty hundreds, will be a hundred forties: that is, according to the lax Hebrew method of indicating six weeks by the phrase of "forty days," you will have a hundred bills or drafts on Father Time, value six weeks each, as the whole period available for intellectual labour. A solid block of about eleven and a half continuous years is all that a long life will furnish for the development of what is most august in man's nature. After *that*, the night comes when no man can work; brain and arm will be alike unserviceable; or, if the life should be unusually extended, the vital powers will be drooping as regards all motions in advance.

Limited thus severely in his *direct* approaches to knowledge, and in his approaches to that which is a thousand times more important than knowledge, viz. the conduct and discipline of the knowing faculty, the more clamorous is the necessity that a wise man should turn to account any INDIRECT and supplementary means towards the same ends; and amongst these means a chief one by right and potentially is CONVERSATION. Even the primary means,—books, study, and meditation,—through errors from without and errors from within, are not *that* which they might be made. Too constantly, when reviewing his own efforts for improvement, a man has reason to say (indignantly, as one injured by others; penitentially, as contributing to this injury himself) "Much of my studies has been thrown away; many books which were useless, or worse than useless, I have read; many books which ought to have been read I have left unread: such is the sad necessity under the absence of all preconceived plan; and the proper road is first ascertained

when the journey is drawing to its close." In a wilderness so vast as that of books, to go astray often and widely is pardonable, because it is inevitable; and, in proportion as the errors on this primary field of study have been great, it is important to have reaped some compensatory benefits on the secondary field of conversation. Books teach by one machinery, conversation by another; and, if these resources were trained into correspondence to their own separate ideals, they might become reciprocally the complements of each other. The false selection of books, for instance, might often be rectified at once by the frank collation of experiences which takes place in miscellaneous colloquial intercourse. But other and greater advantages belong to conversation for the effectual promotion of intellectual culture. Social discussion supplies the natural integration for the deficiencies of private and sequestered study. Simply to rehearse, simply to express in words amongst familiar friends, one's own intellectual perplexities, is oftentimes to clear them up. It is well known that the best means of learning is by teaching. The effort that is made for others is made eventually for ourselves; and the readiest method of illuminating obscure conceptions, or maturing such as are crude, lies in an earnest effort to make them apprehensible by others. Even this is but one amongst the functions fulfilled by conversation. Each separate individual in a company is likely to see any problem or idea under some difference of angle. Each may have some difference of views to contribute, derived either from a different course of reading, or a different tenor of reflection, or perhaps a different train of experience. The advantages of colloquial discussion are not only often commensurate in *degree* to those of study, but they recommend themselves also as being different in *kind*; they are special and *sui generis*. It, must, therefore, be important that so great an organ of intellectual development should not be neutralized by mismanagement, as generally it is, or neglected through insensibility to its latent capacities. The importance of the subject should be measured by its relation to the interests of the intellect; and on this principle we do not scruple to think that, in reviewing our own experience of the causes most commonly at war with the free movement of

conversation as it ought to be, we are in effect contributing hints for a new chapter in any future "Essay on the Improvement of the Mind." Watts's book under that title is really of little practical use; nor would it ever have been thought so had it not been patronized, in a spirit of partisanship, by a particular section of religious dissenters.[1] Wherever *that* happens, the fortune of a book is made; for the sectarian impulse creates a sensible current in favour of the book, and the general or neutral reader yields passively to the motion of the current without knowing or caring to know whence it is derived.

Our remarks must of necessity be cursory here, so that they will not need or permit much preparation; but one distinction which is likely to strike on some minds as to the two different purposes of conversation ought to be noticed, since otherwise it will seem doubtful whether we have not confounded them, or, secondly, if we have *not* confounded them, which of the two it is that our remarks contemplate. In speaking above of conversation, we have fixed our view on those uses of conversation which are ministerial to intellectual culture; but, in relation to the majority of men, conversation is far less valuable as an organ of intellectual culture than of social enjoyment. For one man interested in conversation as a means of advancing his studies, there are fifty men whose interest in conversation points exclusively to convivial pleasure. This, as being a more extensive function of conversation, is so far the more dignified function; whilst, on the other hand, such a purpose as direct mental improvement seems by its superior gravity to challenge the higher rank. Yet, in fact, even here the more general purpose of conversation takes precedency; for, when dedicated to the objects of festal delight, conversation rises by its tendency to the rank of a fine art. It is true that not one man in a million rises to any distinction in this art; nor, whatever France may conceit of herself, has any one nation, amongst other nations, a real precedency in

[1] A repetition of De Quincey's opinion of Watts as given *ante*, pp. 28-29. But the sentence is of blundered structure:—"*of little practical use*; nor would it ever have been *thought so*"! &c.—M.

this art. The artists are rare indeed ; but still the art, as distinguished from the artist, may, by its difficulties, by the quality of its graces, and by the range of its possible brilliances, take rank as a *fine* art ; or, at all events, according to its powers of execution, it tends to that rank ; whereas the best order of conversation that is simply ministerial to a purpose of use cannot pretend to a higher name than that of a *mechanic* art. But these distinctions, though they would form the grounds of a separate treatment in a regular treatise on Conversation, may be practically neglected on this occasion, because the hints offered, by the generality of the terms in which they express themselves, may be applied indifferently to either class of conversation. The main diseases, indeed, which obstruct the healthy movement of conversation recur everywhere ; and, alike whether the object be pleasure or profit in the free interchange of thought, almost universally that free interchange is obstructed in the very same way,—by the very same defect of any controlling principle for sustaining the general rights and interests of the company, and by the same vices of self-indulgent indolence, or of callous selfishness, or of insolent vanity, in the individual talkers.

Let us fall back on the recollections of our own experience. In the course of our life we have heard much of what was reputed to be the select conversation of the day, and we have heard many of those who figured at the moment as effective talkers ; yet, in mere sincerity, and without a vestige of misanthropic retrospect, we must say that never once has it happened to us to come away from any display of that nature without intense disappointment ; and it always appeared to us that this failure (which soon ceased to be a *disappointment*) was inevitable by a necessity of the case. For here lay the stress of the difficulty : almost all depends in most trials of skill upon the parity of those who are matched against each other. An ignorant person supposes that to an able disputant it must be an advantage to have a feeble opponent ; whereas, on the contrary, it is ruin to him ; for he cannot display his own powers but through something of a corresponding power in the resistance of his antagonist. A brilliant fencer is lost and confounded in playing with a

novice; and the same thing takes place in playing at ball, or battledore, or in dancing, where a powerless partner does not enable you to shine the more, but reduces you to mere helplessness, and takes the wind altogether out of your sails. Now, if by some rare good luck the great talker, the protagonist, of the evening has been provided with a commensurate second, it is just possible that something like a brilliant "passage of arms" may be the result,—though much even in that case will depend on the chances of the moment for furnishing a fortunate theme, and even then, amongst the superior part of the company, a feeling of deep vulgarity and of mountebank display is inseparable from such an ostentatious duel of wit. On the other hand, supposing your great talker to be received like any other visitor, and turned loose upon the company, then he must do one of two things: either he will talk upon *outré* subjects specially tabooed to his own private use,—in which case the great man has the air of a quack-doctor addressing a mob from a street stage; or else he will talk like ordinary people upon popular topics,—in which case the company, out of natural politeness, that they may not seem to be staring at him as a lion, will hasten to meet him in the same style, the conversation will become general, the great man will seem reasonable and well-bred, but at the same time, we grieve to say it, the great man will have been extinguished by being drawn off from his exclusive ground. The dilemma, in short, is this:—If the great talker attempts the plan of showing off by firing cannon-shot when everybody else is content with musketry, then undoubtedly he produces an impression, but at the expense of insulating himself from the sympathies of the company, and standing aloof as a sort of monster hired to play tricks of funambulism for the night. Yet, again, if he contents himself with a musket like other people, then for *us*, from whom he modestly hides his talent under a bushel, in what respect is he different from the man who *has* no such talent?

> "If she be not fair to me,
> What care I how fair she be?"

The reader, therefore, may take it, upon the *a priori* logic of this dilemma, or upon the evidence of our own experience,

that all reputation for brilliant talking is a visionary thing, and rests upon a sheer impossibility: viz. upon such a histrionic performance in a state of insulation from the rest of the company as could not be effected, even for a single time, without a rare and difficult collusion, and could not, even for that single time, be endurable to a man of delicate and honourable sensibilities.

Yet surely Coleridge *had* such a reputation, and without needing any collusion at all; for Coleridge, unless he could have all the talk, would have none. But then this was not conversation. It was not *colloquium*, or talking *with* the company, but *alloquium*, or talking *to* the company. As Madame de Staël observed, Coleridge talked, and *could* talk, only by monologue. Such a mode of systematic trespass upon the conversational rights of a whole party gathered together under pretence of amusement is fatal to every purpose of social intercourse, whether that purpose be connected with direct use and the service of the intellect, or with the general graces and amenities of life. The result is the same under whatever impulse such an outrage is practised; but the impulse is not always the same; it varies, and so far the criminal intention varies. In some people this gross excess takes its rise in pure arrogance. They are fully aware of their own intrusion upon the general privileges of the company; they are aware of the temper in which it is likely to be received; but they persist wilfully in the wrong, as a sort of homage levied compulsorily upon those who may wish to resist it, but hardly *can* do so without a violent interruption, wearing the same shape of indecorum as that which they resent. In most people, however, it is not arrogance which prompts this capital offence against social rights, but a blind selfishness, yielding passively to its own instincts, without being distinctly aware of the degree in which this self-indulgence trespasses on the rights of others. We see the same temper illustrated at times in travelling. A brutal person, as we are disposed at first to pronounce him, but more frequently one who yields unconsciously to a lethargy of selfishness, plants himself at the public fireplace, so as to exclude his fellow-travellers from all but a fraction of the warmth. Yet he does not do this in a spirit of wilful

aggression upon others; he has but a glimmering suspicion of the odious shape which his own act assumes to others, for the luxurious torpor of self-indulgence has extended its mists to the energy and clearness of his perceptions. Meantime, Coleridge's habit of soliloquizing through a whole evening of four or five hours had its origin neither in arrogance nor in absolute selfishness. The fact was that he *could* not talk unless he were uninterrupted, and unless he were able to count upon this concession from the company. It was a silent contract between him and his hearers that nobody should speak but himself. If any man objected to this arrangement, why did he come? For, the custom of the place, the *lex loci*, being notorious, by coming at all he was understood to profess his allegiance to the autocrat who presided. It was not, therefore, by an insolent usurpation that Coleridge persisted in monology through his whole life, but in virtue of a concession from the kindness and respect of his friends. You could not be angry with him for using his privilege, for it was a privilege conferred by others, and a privilege which he was ready to resign as soon as any man demurred to it. But, though reconciled to it by these considerations, and by the ability with which he used it, you could not but feel that it worked ill for all parties. Himself it tempted oftentimes into pure garrulity of egotism, and the listeners it reduced to a state of debilitated sympathy or of absolute torpor. Prevented by the custom from putting questions, from proposing doubts, from asking for explanations, reacting by no mode of mental activity, and condemned also to the mental distress of hearing opinions or doctrines stream past them by flights which they must not arrest for a moment so as even to take a note of them, and which yet they could not often understand, or, seeming to understand, could not always approve, the audience sank at times into a listless condition of inanimate vacuity. To be acted upon for ever, but never to react, is fatal to the very powers by which sympathy must grow, or by which intelligent admiration can be evoked. For his own sake, it was Coleridge's interest to have forced his hearers into the active commerce of question and answer, of objection and demur. Not otherwise was it possible that even the attention could be kept

from drooping, or the coherency and dependency of the arguments be forced into light.

The French rarely make a mistake of this nature. The graceful levity of the nation could not easily err in this direction, nor tolerate such deliration in the greatest of men. Not the gay temperament only of the French people, but the particular qualities of the French language,—which (however poor for the higher purposes of passion) is rich beyond all others for purposes of social intercourse,—prompt them to rapid and vivacious exchange of thought. Tediousness, therefore, above all other vices, finds no countenance or indulgence amongst the French, excepting always in two memorable cases: viz., first, the case of tragic dialogue on the stage, which is privileged to be tedious by usage and tradition; and, secondly, the case (authorised by the best usages in living society) of narrators or *raconteurs*. This is a shocking anomaly in the code of French good taste as applied to conversation. Of all the bores whom man in his folly hesitates to hang, and Heaven in its mysterious wisdom suffers to propagate their species, the most insufferable is the teller of "good stories,"—a nuisance that should be put down by cudgelling, a submersion in horse-ponds, or any mode of abatement, as summarily as men would combine to suffocate a vampire or a mad dog. This case excepted, however, the French have the keenest possible sense of all that is odious and all that is ludicrous in prosing, and universally have a horror of *des longueurs*. It is not strange, therefore, that Madame de Staël noticed little as extraordinary in Coleridge beyond this one capital monstrosity of unlimited soliloquy, —that being a peculiarity which she never could have witnessed in France; and, considering the burnish of her French tastes in all that concerned colloquial characteristics, it is creditable to her forbearance that she noticed even this rather as a memorable fact than as the inhuman fault which it was. On the other hand, Coleridge was not so forbearing as regarded the brilliant French lady. He spoke of her to ourselves as a very frivolous person, and in short summary terms that disdained to linger on a subject so inconsiderable. It is remarkable that Goethe and Schiller both conversed with Madame de Staël, like Coleridge, and both spoke of her

afterwards in the same disparaging terms as Coleridge. But it is equally remarkable that Baron *William* Humboldt, who was personally acquainted with all the four parties—Madame de Staël, Goethe, Schiller, and Coleridge—gave it as his opinion (in letters subsequently published) that the lady had been calumniated through a very ignoble cause,—viz. mere ignorance of the French language, or at least non-familiarity with the fluencies of *oral* French. Neither Goethe nor Schiller, though well acquainted with written French, had any command of it for purposes of *rapid* conversation; and Humboldt supposes that mere spite at the trouble which they found in limping after the lady so as to catch one thought that she uttered had been the true cause of their unfavourable sentence upon her. Not malice aforethought, so much as vindictive fury for the sufferings they had endured, accounted for their severity in the opinion of the diplomatic baron. He did not extend the same explanation to Coleridge's case,—because, though even then in habits of intercourse with Coleridge, he had not heard of *his* interview with the lady, nor of the results from that interview; else what was true of the two German wits was true *a fortiori* of Coleridge. The Germans at least *read* French, and talked it slowly, and occasionally understood it when talked by others; but Coleridge did none of these things. We are all of us well aware that Madame de Staël was *not* a trifler: nay, that she gave utterance at times to truths as worthy to be held oracular as any that were uttered by the three inspired wits,—all philosophers, and bound to truth, but all poets, and privileged to be wayward. Thus we may collect from these anecdotes that people accustomed to colloquial despotism, and who wield a sceptre within a circle of their own, are no longer capable of impartial judgments, and do not accommodate themselves with patience, or even with justice, to the pretensions of rivals; and, were it only for this result of conversational tyranny, it calls clamorously for extinction by some combined action upon the part of society.

Is such a combination on the part of society possible as a sustained effort? We imagine that it *is* in these times, and will be more so in the times which are coming. Formerly the social meetings of men and women, except only in capital

cities, were few; and even in such cities the infusion of female influence was not broad and powerful enough for the correction of those great aberrations from just ideals which disfigured social intercourse. But great changes are proceeding: were it only by the vast revolution in our *means* of intercourse, laying open every village to the contagion of social temptations, the world of Western Europe is tending more and more to a mode of living in public. Under such a law of life, conversation becomes a vital interest of every hour, that can no more suffer interruption from individual caprice or arrogance than the animal process of respiration from transient disturbances of health. Once, when travelling was rare, there was no fixed law for the usages of public rooms in inns or coffee-houses; the courtesy of individuals was the tenure by which men held their rights. If a morose person detained the newspaper for hours, there was no remedy. At present, according to the circumstances of the case, there are strict regulations which secure to each individual his own share of the common rights.

A corresponding change will gradually take place in the usages which regulate conversation. It will come to be considered an infringement of the general rights for any man to detain the conversation, or arrest its movement, for more than a short space of time,—which gradually will be more and more defined. This one curtailment of arrogant pretensions will lead to others. Egotism will no longer freeze the openings to intellectual discussions; and conversation will then become, what it never *has* been before, a powerful ally of education and generally of self-culture. The main diseases that besiege conversation at present are—1*st*, The want of *timing*. Those who are not recalled by a sense of courtesy and equity to the continual remembrance that, in appropriating too large a share of the conversation, they are committing a fraud upon their companions, are beyond all control of monitory hints or of reproof which does not take a direct and open shape of personal remonstrance; but this, where the purpose of the assembly is festive and convivial, bears too harsh an expression for most people's feelings. That objection, however, would not apply to any mode of admonition that was universally established. A public

memento carries with it no personality. For instance, in the Roman law-courts, no advocate complained of the *clepsydra*, or water time-piece, which regulated the duration of his pleadings. Now, such a contrivance would not be impracticable at an after-dinner talk. To invert the clepsydra, when all the water had run out, would be an act open to any one of the guests, and liable to no misconstruction when this check was generally applied, and understood to be a simple expression of public defence, not of private rudeness or personality. The clepsydra ought to be filled with some brilliantly-coloured fluid, to be placed in the centre of the table, and with the capacity, at the very most, of the little minute-glasses used for regulating the boiling of eggs. It would obviously be insupportably tedious to turn the glass every two or three minutes ; but to do so occasionally would avail as a sufficient memento to the company. 2*d*, Conversation suffers from the want of some discretional power lodged in an individual for controlling its movements. Very often it sinks into flats of insipidity through mere accident. Some trifle has turned its current upon ground where few of the company have anything to say : the commerce of thought languishes ; and the consciousness that it *is* languishing about a narrow circle, "unde pedem proferre pudor vetat," operates for a general refrigeration of the company. Now, the ancient Greeks had an officer appointed over every convivial meeting, whose functions applied to all cases of doubt or interruption that could threaten the genial harmony, or, perhaps, the genial movement intellectually, of the company. We also have such officers,—presidents, vice-presidents, &c. ; and we need only to extend their powers so that they may exercise over the movement of the conversation the beneficial influence of the Athenian *symposiarch*. At present the evil is that conversation has no authorized originator ; it is servile to the accidents of the moment, and generally these accidents are merely verbal. Some word or some name is dropped casually in the course of an illustration ; and *that* is allowed to suggest a topic, though neither interesting to the majority of the persons present, nor leading naturally into other collateral topics that are more so. Now, in such cases it will be the business of the symposiarch

to restore the interest of the conversation, and to rekindle its animation, by recalling it from any tracks of dulness or sterility into which it may have rambled. The natural *excursiveness* of colloquial intercourse, its tendency to advance by subtle links of association, is one of its advantages; but mere *vagrancy* from positive acquiescence in the direction given to it by chance or by any verbal accident is amongst its worst diseases. The business of the symposiarch will be to watch these morbid tendencies, which are not the deviations of graceful freedom, but the distortions of imbecility and collapse. His business it will also be to derive occasions of discussion bearing a general and permanent interest from the fleeting events or the casual disputes of the day. His business again it will be to bring back a subject that has been imperfectly discussed, and has yielded but half of the interest which it promises, under the interruption of any accident which may have carried the thoughts of the company into less attractive channels. Lastly, it should be an express office of education to form a particular style, cleansed from *verbiage*, from elaborate parenthesis, and from circumlocution,[1] as the only style fitted for a purpose which is one of pure enjoyment, and where every moment used by the speaker is deducted from a public stock.

Many other suggestions for the improvement of conversation might be brought forward within ampler limits; and especially for that class of conversation which moves by discussion a whole code of regulations might be proposed that would equally promote the interests of the individual speakers and the public interests of the truth involved in the question discussed. Meantime nobody is more aware than we are that no style of conversation is more essentially vulgar than that which moves by disputation. This is the vice of the young and the inexperienced, but especially of those amongst them who are fresh from academic life. But discussion is not necessarily disputation; and the two orders of conversation—*that*, on the one hand, which contemplates an interest of knowledge and of the self-developing intellect;

[1] *Circumlocution* and *parenthesis* agree in this — that they keep the attention in a painful condition of suspense. But suspense is anxiety.

that, on the other hand, which forms one and the widest amongst the gay embellishments of life — will always advance together. Whatever there may remain of illiberal in the first (for, according to the remark of Burke, there is always something illiberal in the severer aspects of study until balanced by the influence of social amenities) will correct itself, or will tend to correct itself, by the model held up in the second ; and thus the great organ of social intercourse by means of speech, which hitherto has done little for man, except through the channel of its ministrations to the direct *business* of daily necessities, will at length rise into a rivalship with books, and become fixed amongst the alliances of intellectual progress, not less than amongst the ornamental accomplishments of convivial life.

A BRIEF APPRAISAL OF THE GREEK LITERATURE IN ITS FOREMOST PRETENSIONS[1]

Part I.—The Greek Poets and Prose-Writers generally

No question has been coming up at intervals for reconsideration more frequently than that which respects the comparative pretensions of Pagan (viz. Greek and Roman) Literature on the one side, and Modern (that is, the Literature of Christendom) on the other. Being brought uniformly before unjust tribunals—that is, tribunals corrupted and bribed by their own vanity—it is not wonderful that this great question should have been stifled and overlaid with peremptory decrees, dogmatically cutting the knot rather than skilfully untying it, as often as it has been moved afresh and put upon the roll for a re-hearing. It is no mystery to those who are in the secret, and who can lay A and B together, why it should have happened that the most interesting of all literary questions, and the most comprehensive (for it includes most others, and some special to itself), has, in the first place, never been pleaded in a style of dignity, of philosophic precision, of feeling, or of research, proportioned

[1] Published in *Tait's Magazine* for December 1838 and June 1839, with this for the full title:—"A Brief Appraisal of the Greek Litera-" ture in its Foremost Pretensions: By way of Counsel to Adults who " are hesitating as to the Propriety of Studying the Greek Language " with a view to the Literature; and by way of consolation to those " whom circumstances have obliged to lay aside that plan. By Thomas " De Quincey." The paper was not reprinted in De Quincey's Collective Edition; nor is it in the American Collective Edition. See remarks in Editor's Preface to this volume.—M.

to its own merits, and to the numerous "issues" (forensically speaking) depending upon it ; nor, in the second place, has ever received such an adjudication as was satisfactory *even at the moment.* For, be it remembered, after all, that any provisional adjudication—one growing out of the fashion or taste of a single era—could not, at any rate, be binding for a different era. A judgment which met the approbation of Spenser could hardly have satisfied Dryden, nor another which satisfied Pope have been recognised as authentic by us of the year 1838. It is the normal or exemplary condition of the human mind, its ideal condition, not its abnormal condition as seen in the transitory modes and fashions of its taste or its opinions, which only

"Can lay great bases for eternity",

or give even a colourable permanence to any decision in a matter so large, so perplexed, so profound, as this great pending suit between antiquity and ourselves—between the junior men of this earth and ourselves, the seniors, as Lord Bacon reasonably calls us. Appeals will be brought *ad infinitum*—we ourselves shall bring appeals—to set aside any judgment that may be given, until something more is consulted than individual taste ; better evidence brought forward than the result of individual reading ; something higher laid down as the *grounds* of judgment, as the very principles of the jurisprudence which controls the court, than those vague *responsa prudentum*, countersigned by the great name, perhaps, of Aristotle, but still too often mere products of local convenience, of inexperience, of experience too limited and exclusively Grecian, or of absolute caprice—rules, in short, which are themselves not less truly *sub judice* and liable to appeal than that very appeal cause to which they are applied as decisive.

We have remarked that it is no mystery why the decision should have gone pretty uniformly in favour of the ancients ; for here is the dilemma :—A man, attempting this problem, *is* or *is not* a classical scholar. If he *is*, then he has already received a bias in his judgment ; he is a bribed man, bribed by his vanity ; and is liable to be challenged as one of the judges. If he is *not*, then he is but imperfectly qualified—

imperfectly as respects his knowledge and powers; whilst, even as respects his will and affections, it may be alleged that he also is under a bias and a corrupt influence; his interest being no less obvious to undervalue a literature which, as to *him*, is tabooed and under lock and key than his opponent's is to put a preposterous value upon that knowledge which very probably is the one sole advantageous distinction between him and his neighbours.

We might cite an illustration from the French literary history on this very point. Every nation in turn has had its rows in this great quarrel; which is, in fact, coextensive with the controversies upon human nature itself. The French, of course, have had *theirs*—solemn tournaments, single duels, casual "turn-ups," and regular "stand-up" fights. The most celebrated of these was in the beginning of the last century, when, amongst others who acted as bottle-holders, umpires, &c., two champions in particular "peeled" and fought a considerable number of rounds, mutually administering severe punishment, and both coming out of the ring disfigured: these were M. la Motte and Madame Dacier.[1] But Motte was the favourite at first; and once he got Dacier "into chancery," and "fibbed" her twice round the ropes, so that she became a truly pitiable and delightful spectacle to the connoisseurs in fibbing and bloodshed. But here lay the difference: Motte was a hard hitter; he was a clever man, and (which all clever men are not) a man of sense; but, like Shakspere, he had no Greek. On the other hand, Dacier had nothing *but* Greek. A certain abbé at that time amused all Paris with his caricatures of this Madame Dacier; "who," said he, "ought to be cooking her husband's dinner, and darning his stockings, instead of skirmishing and tilting with Grecian spears; for be it known that, after all her *not cooking* and her *not darning*, she is as poor a scholar as her injured husband is a good one." And *there* the abbé was right; witness the husband's Horace, in 9 vols., against the wife's Homer. However, this was not generally understood. The lady, it was believed, waded

[1] Anthony Houdart de la Motte, French critic, 1672-1731; Anne Dacier, French critic and scholar, 1654-1720 (wife of André Dacier, also scholar and critic).—M.

petticoat-deep in Greek clover ; and in any Grecian field of dispute, naturally she must be in the right as against one who barely knew his own language and a little Latin. Motte was, therefore, thought by most people to have come off second best. For, as soon as ever he opened thus—"Madame, it seems to me that, agreeably to all common sense or common decorum, the Greek poet should here ———," instantly, without listening to his argument, the intrepid Amazon replied (ὑποδρα ἰδουσα), "You foolish man ! you remarkably silly man !—*that* is because you know no better ; and the reason you know no better, is because you do not understand *ton d'apameibomenos* as I do." *Ton d'apameibomenos* fell like a hand-grenade amongst Motte's papers, and blew him up effectually in the opinion of the multitude. No matter what he might say in reply—no matter how reasonable, how unanswerable—that one spell of "No Greek ! no Greek !" availed as a talisman to the lady both for offence and defence, and refuted all syllogisms and all eloquence as effectually as the cry of *A la lanterne !* in the same country some fourscore years after.

So it will always be. Those who (like Madame Dacier) possess no accomplishment *but* Greek will, of necessity, set a superhuman value upon that literature in all its parts to which their own narrow skill becomes an available key. Besides that, over and above this coarse and conscious motive for overrating that which reacts with an equal and answerable overrating upon their own little philological attainments, there is another agency at work, and quite unconsciously to the subjects of that agency, in disturbing the sanity of any estimate they may make of a foreign literature. It is the habit (well known to psychologists) of transferring to anything created by our own skill, or which reflects our own skill, as if it lay causatively and objectively [1] in the reflecting thing itself, that pleasurable power which in very truth belongs subjectively [1] to the mind of him who surveys it, from conscious success in the

[1] *Objectively* and *subjectively* are terms somewhat too metaphysical ; but they are so indispensable to accurate thinking that we are inclined to show them some indulgence ; and the more so in cases where the mere position and connexion of the words are half sufficient to explain their application.

exercise of his own energies. Hence it is that we see daily without surprise young ladies hanging enamoured over the pages of an Italian author, and calling attention to trivial commonplaces, such as, clothed in plain mother-English, would have been more repulsive to them than the distinctions of a theologian or the counsels of a great-grandmother. They mistake for a pleasure yielded by the author what is in fact the pleasure attending their own success in mastering what was lately an insuperable difficulty.

It is indeed a pitiable spectacle to any man of sense and feeling who happens to be really familiar with the golden treasures of his own ancestral literature, and a spectacle which moves alternately scorn and sorrow, to see young people squandering their time and painful study upon writers not fit to unloose the shoes' latchets of many amongst their own compatriots; making painful and remote voyages after the drossy refuse, when the pure gold lies neglected at their feet. Too often he is reminded of a case which is still sometimes to be witnessed in London. Now and then it will happen that a lover of art, modern or antique alike, according to its excellence, will find himself honoured by an invitation from some *millionaire*, or some towering grandee, to "assist," as the phrase is, at the opening of a case newly landed from the Tiber or the Arno, and fraught (as he is assured) with the very gems of Italian art, intermingled besides with many genuine antiques. He goes: the cases are solemnly disgorged; adulatory hangers-on, calling themselves artists, and, at all events, so much so as to appreciate the solemn farce enacted, stand by uttering hollow applauses of my Lord's taste, and endeavouring to play upon the tinkling cymbals of spurious enthusiasm: whilst every man of real discernment perceives at a glance the mere refuse and sweeping of a third-rate *studio*, such as many a native artist would disdain to turn out of his hands, and antiques such as could be produced, with a month's notice, by cart-loads in many an obscure corner of London. Yet for this rubbish has the great man taken a painful tour; compassed land and sea; paid away in exchange a king's ransom; and now claims on their behalf the very humblest homage of artists who are taxed with the basest envy if they refuse it, and who, mean-

time, cannot in sincerity look upon the trumpery with other feelings than such as the potter's wheel, if (like Ezekiel's wheels) it were instinct with spirit, would entertain for the vilest of its own creations—culinary or "post-culinary" mugs and jugs. We, the writers of this paper, are not artists, are not connected with artists. God knows it, as well as Mr. Tait.[1] And yet, upon the general principle of sympathy with native merit, and of disgust towards all affectation, we cannot but recall such anecdotes with scorn; and often we recollect the stories recorded by poor Benvenuto Cellini, that dissolute but brilliant vagabond,[2] who (like our own British artists) was sometimes upbraided with the degeneracy of modern art, and, upon his humbly requesting some evidence, received, by way of practical answer, a sculptured gem or vase, perhaps with a scornful demand of—when would *he* be able to produce anything like that. "Eh, Master Ben? Fancy we must wait a few centuries or so before *you'll* be ready with the fellow of this." And, lo! on looking into some hidden angle of the beautiful production, poor Cellini discovered his own private mark, the supposed antique having been a pure forgery of his own. Such cases remind one too forcibly of the pretty Horatian tale where, in a contest between two men who undertake to mimic a pig's grunting, he who happens to be the favourite of the audience is applauded to the echo for his felicitous execution, and repeatedly *encored*, whilst the other man is hissed off the stage, and well kicked by a band of amateurs and cognoscenti, as a poor miserable copyist and impostor; but, unfortunately for the credit of his exploders, he has just time, before they have quite kicked him off, for exposing to view the real pig concealed under his cloak, which pig it was, and not himself, that had been the artist—forced by pinches into "mimicry" of his own porcine music. Of all baffled connoisseurs, surely these Roman pig-fanciers must have looked the most confounded. Yet there is no knowing: and we ourselves have a clever friend, but rather too given to subtilising, who contends, upon some argument not perfectly

[1] The proprietor and main editor of *Tait's Magazine*.—M.

[2] Benvenuto Cellini, Italian artist (1500-1570); whose autobiography is one of the most curious and interesting of books.—M.

intelligible to us, that Horace was not so conclusive in his logic as he fancied; that the real pig might not have an "ideal" or normal squeak, but a peculiar and non-representative squeak; and that, after all, the man might deserve the "threshing" he got. Well, it may be so; but, however, the Roman audience, wrong or not, for once fancied themselves in the wrong; and we cannot but regret that our own ungenerous disparagers of native merit, and *exclusive* eulogisers of the dead or the alien—of those only "*quos Libitina sacravit*," or whom oceans divide from us—are not now and then open to the same *palpable* refutation, as they are certainly guilty of the same mean error, in prejudging the whole question, and refusing to listen even to the plain evidence of their own feelings, or, in some cases, to the voice of their own senses.

From this preface it is already abundantly clear what side *we* take in this dispute about modern literature and the antique.[1] And we now propose to justify our leaning by a general review of the Pagan authors in their elder section—that is, the Grecians. These will be enough in all conscience for one essay; and even for them we meditate a very cursory inquest; not such as would suffice in a grand ceremonial day of battle—a *justum prælium*, as a Roman would call it—but in a mere perfunctory skirmish, or (if the reader objects to that word as pedantic, though, really, it is a highly favoured word amongst ancient divines, and with many a

[1] In general usage "*the antique*" is a phrase limited to the expression of art; but improperly so. It is quite as legitimately used to denote the *literature* of ancient times, in contradistinction to the modern. As to the term *classical*, though generally employed as equivalent to Greek and Roman, the reader must not forget that this is quite a false limitation, contradicting the very reason for applying the word in *any* sense to literature. For the application arose thus:—The social body of Rome being divided into six classes, of which the lowest was the sixth, it followed that the highest was the first. Thence, by a natural process common to most languages, those who belonged to this highest had no number at all assigned to them. The very absence of a number, the calling them *classici*, implied that they belonged to *the* class emphatically, or *par excellence*. *The classics* meant, therefore, the grandees in social consideration; and thence by analogy in literature. But, if this analogy be transferred from Rome to Greece, where it had no corresponding root in civic arrangement,—then, by parity of reason, to all nations.

"philosopher
Who has read Alexander Ross over")[1]—

why, in that case, let us indulge his fastidious taste by call ing it an autoschediastic combat,—to which, surely, there can be no such objection. And, as the manner of the combat is autoschediastic or extemporaneous, and to meet a hurried occasion, so is the reader to understand that the object of our disputation is not the learned, but the unlearned student, and our purpose not so much to discontent the one with his painful acquisitions as to console the other under what, upon the old principle of *omne ignotum pro magnifico*, he is too apt to imagine his irreparable disadvantages. We set before us as our especial auditor the reasonable man of plain sense but strong feeling, who wishes to know how much he has lost, and what injury the gods did him when, though making him perhaps poetical, they cut short his allowance of Latin, and, as to Greek, gave him not a jot more than a cow has in her side pocket.

Let us begin at the beginning,—and that, as every-body knows, is Homer. He is, indeed, so much at the beginning that for that very reason (if even there were no other) he is, and will be evermore, supremely interesting. Is the unlearned reader aware of his age? Upon that point there are more hypotheses than one or even two. Some there are among the chronologers who make him eleven hundred years anterior to Christ. But those who allow him least place him more than nine—that is, about two centuries before the establishment of the Grecian Olympiads, and (which is pretty nearly the same thing as regards time) before Romulus and Remus. Such an antiquity as this, even on its own account, is a reasonable object of interest. A poet to whom the great-grandfather of old Ancus Martius (his grandfather, did we say—that is, *avus*?—nay, his *abavus*, his *atavus*, his *tritavus*) looked back as to one in a line with his remote ancestor,—a poet who, if he travelled about as extensively as some have supposed him to do, or even as his own countryman Herodotus most certainly did five or six

[1] The immortal rhyme in *Hudibras* which conserves the memory of the voluminous seventeenth-century divine and author Alexander Ross (1590-1654), Scottish by birth, but naturalised in England.—M.

hundred years afterwards, might have conversed with the very workmen who laid the foundations of the first temple at Jerusalem—might have bent the knee before Solomon in all his glory :—such a poet, were he no better than the worst of our own old metrical romancers, would, merely for his antiquity, merely for the sublime fact of having been coeval with the eldest of those whom the eldest of histories presents to our knowledge, coeval with the earliest kings of Judah, older than the greatest of the Judean prophets, older than the separation of the two Jewish crowns and the revolt of Israel, and, even with regard to Moses and to Joshua, not in any larger sense junior than as we ourselves are junior to Chaucer,—purely and exclusively with regard to these pretensions backed and supported by an antique form of an antique language, the most comprehensive and the most melodious in the world,—would, could, should, ought to, merit a filial attention, and perhaps, with those who had waggon-loads of time to spare, might plead the benefit, beyond most of those in whose favour it was enacted, of that Horatian rule—

> "vos exemplaria Græca
> Nocturna versate manu, versate diurna."

In fact, when we recollect that, in round numbers, we ourselves may be considered as two thousand years in advance of Christ, and that (by assuming less even than a mean between the different dates assigned to Homer) he stands a thousand years before Christ, we find between Homer and ourselves a gulf of three thousand years, or about one clear half of the total extent which we grant to the present duration of our planet. This in itself is so sublime a circumstance in the relations of Homer to our era, and the sense of power is so delightfully titillated to that man's feeling who, by means of Greek, and a very moderate skill in this fine language, is able to grasp the awful span, the vast arch of which one foot rests upon 1838 and the other almost upon the War of Troy,—the mighty rainbow which, like the Archangel in the Revelation, plants its western limb amongst the carnage and the magnificence of Waterloo, and the other amidst the vanishing gleams and the dusty clouds of Agamemnon's rearguard,—that we may pardon a little exultation

to the man who can actually mutter to himself, as he rides home of a summer evening, the very words and vocal music of the old blind man at whose command

> "the Iliad and the Odyssey
> Rose to the murmurs of the voiceful sea."

But pleasures in this world fortunately are without end. And every man, after all, has many pleasures peculiar to himself—pleasures which no man shares with him, even as he is shut out from many of other men. To renounce one in particular is no subject for sorrow, so long as many remain in that very class equal or superior. Ellwood the Quaker had a luxury which none of us will ever have, in hearing the very voice and utterance of a poet quite as blind as Homer, and by many a thousand times more sublime.[1] And yet Ellwood was not perhaps much happier for *that*. For (now to proceed, reader) abstract from his *sublime* antiquity, and his being the very earliest of authors—allowance made for one or two Hebrew writers (who, being inspired, are scarcely to be viewed as human competitors),—how much is there in Homer, *intrinsically* in Homer, stripped of his fine draperies of time and circumstance,—in the naked Homer, disapparelled of the pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious antiquity,—to remunerate a man for his labour in acquiring Greek? Men think very differently about what *will* remunerate any given labour. A fool (professional *fool*) in Shakspere ascertains, by a natural process of logic, that a "remuneration" means a *testern*, which is just sixpence, and two remunerations, therefore, a testoon, or one shilling. But many men will consider the same service ill paid by a thousand pounds. So of the reimbursement for learning a language. Lord Camden is said to have learned Spanish merely to enjoy Don Quixote more racily. Cato, the elder Cato, after abusing Greek throughout his life, sat down in extreme old age to study it; and wherefore? Mr. Coleridge

[1] Thomas Ellwood, the young Quaker who knew Milton in his later years and blindness, visited him at the cottage in Chalfont-St.-Giles's, Buckinghamshire, where he spent some months of 1665-6 to avoid the Great Plague in London, and had the honour of being then allowed to read *Paradise Lost* while it was still in manuscript.—M.

mentions an author in whom, upon opening his pages with other expectations, he stumbled upon the following fragrant passage :—"But from this frivolous digression upon philosophy and the fine arts let us return to a subject too little understood or appreciated in these sceptical days—the subject of *dung*." Now, *that* was precisely the course of thought with this old censorious Cato. So long as Greek offered, or seemed to offer, nothing but philosophy or poetry, he was clamorous against Greek ; but he began to thaw and melt a little upon the charms of Greek,—he "owned the soft impeachment,"—when he heard of some Grecian treatises upon *beans* and *turnips* ; and, finally, he sank under its voluptuous seductions when he heard of others upon DUNG. There are, therefore, as different notions about a "remuneration ' in this case as the poor fool had met with in *his* case. We, however, unappalled by the bad names of "Goth," "Vandal," and so forth, shall honestly lay before the reader *our* notions.

When Dryden wrote his famous, indeed matchless, epigram upon the three great masters (or reputed masters) of the Epopee,[1] he found himself at no loss to characterise the last of the triad : no matter what qualities he imputed to the first and the second, he knew himself safe in imputing them all to the third. The mighty modern had everything that his predecessors were ever *thought* to have, as well as something beside.[2] So he expressed the surpassing grandeur of

[1] Dryden's famous lines on Homer, Virgil, and Milton, first printed under the portrait of Milton prefixed to Tonson's illustrated folio edition of *Paradise Lost* in 1688 :—

"Three poets, in three distant ages born,
Greece, Italy, and England did adorn.
The first in loftiness of thought surpassed ;
The next in majesty ; in both the last.
The force of Nature could no farther go :
To make a third, she joined the former two."—M.

[2] The beauty of this famous epigram lies in the *form* of the conception. The first had A ; the second had B ; and, when Nature, to furnish out a third, should have given him C, she found that A and B had already exhausted her cycle, and that she could distinguish her third great favourite only by giving him both A and B in combination. But the filling up of this outline is imperfect ; for the A (*loftiness*) and the B (*majesty*) are one and the same quality under different names.

Milton by saying that in him Nature had embodied, by concentration as in one focus, whatever excellencies she had scattered separately amongst her earlier favourites. But, in strict regard to the facts, this is far from being a faithful statement of the relations between Milton and his elder brothers of the *Epos*. In sublimity, if that is what Dryden meant by "loftiness of thought," it is not so fair to class Milton with the greatest of poets as to class him apart, retired from all others, sequestered, "sole-sitting by the shores of old romance." In other poets,—in Dante, for example,—there may be rays, gleams, sudden coruscations, casual scintillations, of the sublime; but, for any continuous and sustained blaze of the sublime, it is in vain to look for it *except* in Milton, making allowances (as before) for the inspired sublimities of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and of the great Evangelist's Revelations. As to Homer, no critic who writes from personal and *direct* knowledge on the one hand, or who understands the value of words on the other, ever contended in any critical sense for sublimity as a quality to which he had the slightest pretensions. What! not Longinus?[1] If he did, it would have been of little consequence; for he had no field of comparison, as we,—knowing no literature but one, whereas *we* have a range of seven or eight. But he did not. Τὸ ὑψηλον,[2] or the elevated, in the Longinian sense,

[1] Dionysius Cassius Longinus, Greek philosopher and rhetorician of the third century (213-273), best remembered now for his treatise Περὶ ὕψους, generally translated "Of the Sublime."—M.

[2] Because the Latin word *sublimis* is applied to objects soaring upwards, or floating aloft, or at an aerial altitude, and because the word does *sometimes* correspond to our idea of the sublime (in which the notion of height is united with the notion of moral grandeur), and because, in the excessive vagueness and lawless latitudinarianism of our common Greek Lexicons, the word ὑψος is translated, *inter alia*, by *τὸ sublime, sublimitas*, &c.—hence it has happened that the title of the little essay ascribed to Longinus, Περὶ ὑψοῦς, is usually rendered into English *Concerning the Sublime*. But the idea of the Sublime, as defined, circumscribed, and circumstantiated, in English literature—an idea altogether of English growth—the *Sublime by way of polar antithesis to the Beautiful*, had no existence amongst ancient critics; consequently it could have no expression. It is a great thought, a true thought, a demonstrable thought, that the Sublime, as thus ascertained, and in contraposition to the Beautiful, grew up on the basis of *sexual* distinctions,—the Sublime corresponding to the male,

expressed all, no matter of what origin, of what tendency, which gives a character of life and animation to composition —whatever raises it above the dead level of flat prosaic style. Emphasis, or what in an artist's sense gives *relief* to a passage, causing it to stand forward and in advance of what surrounds it —*that* is the predominating idea in the "sublime" of Longinus. And this explains what otherwise has perplexed his modern interpreters—viz. that amongst the elements of his sublime he ranks even the pathetic, *i.e.* (say they) what by connecting itself with the depressing passion of grief is the very counter-agent to the elevating affection of the sublime. True, most sapient sirs, my very worthy and approved good masters; but that very consideration should have taught you to look back, and reconsider your translation of the capital word ὕψος. It was rather too late in the day, when you had waded half-seas over in your translation, to find out either that you yourselves were ignoramuses, or that your principal was an ass. "Returning were as tedious as go o'er"; and any man might guess how you would settle such a dilemma. It is, according to you, a little oversight of your principal: "*humanum aliquid passus est.*" We, on the other hand, affirm that, if an error at all on the part of Longinus, it is too monstrous for any man to have "overlooked." As long as he could see a pike-staff, he must have seen that. And, therefore, we revert to *our* view of the case—viz. that it is yourselves who have committed the blunder, in translating by the Latin word *sublimis*[1] at all, but still more after it had received new determinations under modern usage.

and the Beautiful, its anti-pole, corresponding to the female. Behold! we show you a mystery!

[1] No word has ever given so much trouble to modern critics as this very word (now under discussion) of the *sublime*. To those who have little Greek and *no* Latin it is necessary in the first place that we should state what are the most obvious elements of the word. According to the noble army of etymologists, they are these two Latin words—*sub*, under, and *limus*, mud. Oh! gemini! who would have thought of groping for the sublime in such a situation as that?—unless indeed, it were that writer cited by Mr. Coleridge, and just now referred to by ourselves, who complains of frivolous modern readers, as not being able to raise and sequester their thoughts to the abstract consideration of dung. Hence it has followed that most people have quarrelled with the etymology. Whereupon the late Dr.

Now, therefore, after this explanation, recurring to the Longinian critiques upon Homer, it will avail any idolater of Homer but little, it will affect *us* not much, to mention that Longinus makes frequent reference to the Iliad as the great source of the sublime—

> "A quo, ceu fonte perenni,
> Vatum Pieriis ora rigantur aquis";

for, as respected Grecian poets, and as respected *his* sense of the word, it cannot be denied that Homer was such. He was the great well-head of inspiration to the Pagan poets of after times; who, however (*as a body*), moved in the narrowest circle that has ever yet confined the natural freedom of the poetic mind. But, in conceding this, let it not be forgotten how much we concede. We concede as much as Longinus demanded,—that is, that Homer furnished an ideal or model of fluent narration, picturesque description, and the first outlines of what could be called characteristic delineations of persons. Accordingly, uninventive Greece,—for we maintain loudly that Greece, in her poets, *was* uninventive and sterile beyond the example of other nations,—received as a tradi-

Parr, of pedantic memory, wrote a huge letter to Mr. Dugald Stewart, but the marrow of which lies in a nutshell, especially being rather hollow within. The learned doctor, in the first folio, grapples with the word *sub*, which, says he, comes from the Greek: so much is clear —but from what Greek, Bezonian? The thoughtless world, says he, trace it to ὑπὸ (hypo) sub, *i.e.* under; but I, Ego, Samuel Parr, the Birmingham doctor, trace it to ὑπερ (hyper), super, *i.e.* above; between which the difference is not less than between a chestnut horse and a horse-chestnut. To this learned Parrian dissertation on mud there cannot be much reasonably to object, except its length in the first place, and, secondly, that we ourselves exceedingly doubt the common interpretation of *limus*. Most unquestionably, if the sublime is to be brought into any relation at all to mud, we shall all be of one mind—that it must be found *above*. But to us it appears that, when the true modern idea of mud was in view, *limus* was not the word used. Cicero, for instance, when he wishes to call Piso "filth, mud," &c. calls him *Cœnum*: and, in general, *limus* seems to have involved the notion of something adhesive, and rather to express *plaister*, or artificially prepared cement, &c., than filth or impure depositions. Accordingly, our own definition differs from the Parrian or Birmingham definition, and may, nevertheless, be a Birmingham definition also. Not having room to defend it, for the present we forbear to state it.

tional inheritance the characters of the Paladins of the Troad.[1] Achilles is always the all-accomplished and supreme amongst these Paladins, the Orlando of ancient romance; Agamemnon, for ever the Charlemagne; Ajax, for ever the sullen, imperturbable, columnar champion, the Mandricardo, the *Bergen-op-Zoom* of his faction, and corresponding to our modern "Chicken" in the pugilistic ring, who was so called (as the books of the Fancy say) because he was a "glutton," and a "glutton" in this sense—that he would take any amount of cramming (*i.e.* any possible quantum of "milling," or "punishment"). Ulysses, again, is uniformly, no matter whether in the solemnities of the tragic scene or the festivities of the Ovidian romance, the same shy cock, but also sly cock, with the least thought of a white feather in his plumage; Diomed is the same unmeaning double of every other hero, just as Rinaldo is with respect to his greater cousin, Orlando; and so of Teucer, Meriones, Idomeneus, and the other less marked characters. The Greek Drama took up these traditional characters, and sometimes deepened, saddened, exalted the features: as Sophocles, for instance, does with his "Ajax Flagellifer," Ajax the knouter of sheep,—where, by the way, the remorse and penitential grief of Ajax for his own self-degradation, and the depth of his affliction for the triumph which he had afforded to his enemies, taken in connexion with the tender fears of his wife Tecmessa for the fate to which his gloomy despair was too manifestly driving him; her own conscious desolation, and the orphan weakness of her son, in the event which she too fearfully anticipates—the final suicide of Ajax; the brotherly affection of Teucer to the widow and the young son of the hero, together with the unlooked-for sympathy of Ulysses, who, instead of exulting in the ruin of his antagonist, mourns over it with generous tears,—compose a situation, and a suc-

[1] There is a difficulty in assigning any term as comprehensive enough to describe the Grecian heroes and their antagonists who fought at Troy. The Seven Chieftains against Thebes are described sufficiently as Theban captains; but to say *Trojan* chieftains would express only the heroes of one side; *Grecian*, again, would be liable to that fault equally, and to another far greater,—of being under no limitation as to time. This difficulty must explain and (if it can) justify our collective phrase of the Paladins of the Troad.

cession of situations, not equalled in the Greek Tragedy ; and, in that instance, we see an effort, rare in Grecian poetry, of conquest achieved by idealization over a mean incident—viz. the hallucination of brain in Ajax, by which he mistakes the sheep for his Grecian enemies, ties them up for flagellation, and scourges them as periodically as if he were a critical reviewer. But, really, in one extremity of this madness, where he fixes upon an old ram for Agamemnon as the leader of the flock, the ἀναξ ἀνδρων Ἀγαμεμνων, there is an extravagance of the ludicrous against which, though not exhibited scenically, but simply narrated, no solemnity of pathos could avail. Even in narration the violation of tragical dignity is insufferable, and is as much worse than the hyper-tragic horrors of "Titus Andronicus" (a play which is usually printed without reason amongst those of Shakspere) as absolute farce or contradiction of all pathos must inevitably be a worse indecorum than physical horrors which simply outrage it by excess. Let us not, therefore, hear of the judgment displayed upon the Grecian stage, when even Sophocles, the chief master of dramatic economy and scenical propriety, could thus err by an aberration so far transcending the most memorable violation of stage decorum which has ever been charged upon the English Drama.

From Homer, therefore, were left, as a bequest to all future poets, the romantic adventures which grow, as so many collateral dependencies,

"From the tale of Troy divine";

and from Homer was derived also the discrimination of the leading characters: which, after all, were but coarsely and rudely discriminated,—at least, for the majority. In one instance only we acknowledge an exception. We have heard a great modern poet dwelling with real and not counterfeit enthusiasm upon the character (or rather upon the general picture, as made up both of character and position) which the course of the Iliad assigns gradually to Achilles. The view which he took of this impersonation of human grandeur, combining all gifts of intellect and of body,—matchless speed, strength, inevitable eye, courage, and the immortal beauty of a god,—being also, by his birth-right, half-divine, and conse-

crated to the imagination by his fatal interweaving with the destinies of Troy, and to the heart by the early death which to *his own knowledge* [1] impended over his magnificent career, and so abruptly shut up its vista—the view, we say, which our friend took of the presiding character throughout the "Iliad," who is introduced to us in the very first line, and who is only eclipsed for seventeen books to emerge upon us with more awful lustre;—the view which he took was that Achilles, and Achilles only, in the Grecian poetry, was a great idea—an idealized creation; and we remember that in this respect he compared the Homeric Achilles with the Angelica of Ariosto. Her only be regarded as an idealization in the "Orlando Furioso." And certainly in the luxury and excess of her all-conquering beauty, which drew after her from "ultimate Cathay" to the camps of the baptized in France, and back again from the palace of Charlemagne drew half the Paladins and "half Spain militant" to the portals of the rising sun,—that sovereign beauty which (to say nothing of kings and princes withered by her frowns) ruined for a time the most princely of all the Paladins, the supreme Orlando, crazed him with scorn,

"And robbed him of his noble wits outright,"—

in all this we must acknowledge a glorification of power not unlike that of Achilles:—

"Irresistible Pelides, whom, unarmed,
No strength of man or fiercest wild beast could withstand;
Who tore the lion as the lion tears the kid;
Ran on embattled armies clad in iron,
And, weaponless himself,
Made arms ridiculous, useless the forgery
Of brazen shield and spear, the hammered cuirass,
Chalybean-tempered steel, and frock of mail,
Adamantean proof:
But safest he who stood aloof,

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[1] "*To his own knowledge*":—See, for proof of this, the gloomy serenity of his answer to his dying victim, when predicting his approaching end:—

"Enough; I know my fate; to die—to see no more
My much-loved parents, and my native shore," &c. &c.

> When insupportably his foot advanced,
> In scorn of their proud arms and their warlike tools,
> Spurned them to death by troops. The bold Priamides
> Fled from his lion ramp; old warriors turned
> Their plated backs under his heel,
> Or grovelling soiled their crested helmets in the dust."[1]

These are the words of Milton in describing that "heroic Nazarite," God's champion

> "Promised by heavenly message twice descending";

heralded, like Pelides,

> "By an angel of his birth,
> Who from his father's field
> Rode up in flames after his message told":

these are the celestial words which describe the celestial prowess of the Hebrew monomachist, the irresistible Samson, and are hardly less applicable to the "champion paramount" of Greece confederate.

This, therefore, this unique conception, with what power they might, later Greek poets adopted; and the other Homeric characters they transplanted somewhat monotonously, but at times, we are willing to admit and have already admitted, improving and solemnizing the original epic portraits when brought upon the stage. But all this extent of obligation amongst later poets of Greece to Homer serves less to argue *his* opulence than *their* penury. And, if, quitting the one great blazing jewel, the Urim and Thummim of the "Iliad," you descend to individual passages of poetic effect, and if amongst these a fancy should seize you of asking for a specimen of the *sublime* in particular, what is it that you are offered by the critics? Nothing that we remember beyond one single passage, in which the god Neptune is described in a steeplechase, and "making play" at a terrific pace. And, certainly, enough is exhibited of the old boy's hoofs, and their spanking qualities, to warrant our backing him against a railroad for a rump and dozen; but, after all, there is nothing to grow frisky about, as Longinus does,—who gets up the steam of a blue-stocking

[1] Transferred, with somewhat forced adaptation to Achilles, from Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, 125-141.—M.

enthusiasm, and boils us a regular gallop of ranting, in which, like the conceited snipe [1] upon the Liverpool railroad, he thinks himself to run a match with Samson, and, whilst affecting to admire Homer, is manifestly squinting at the reader to see how far he admires his own flourish of admiration, and in the very agony of his frosty raptures is quite at leisure to look out for a little private traffic of rapture on his own account. But it won't do; this old critical posture-master (whom if Aurelian hanged, surely he knew what he was about) may as well put up his rapture pipes, and (as Lear says) "not squiny" at us; for let us ask Master Longinus, in what earthly respect do these great strides of Neptune exceed Jack with his seven-league boots? Let him answer that, if he can. We hold that Jack has the advantage. Or, again, look at the Koran! Does any man but a foolish Oriental think that passage sublime where Mahomet describes the divine pen? It is, says he, made of mother-of-pearl: so much for the "raw material," as the economists say. But now for the size: it can hardly be called a "portable" pen at all events, for we are told that it is so tall of its age that an Arabian thoroughbred horse would require 500 years for galloping down the slit to the nib. Now, this Arabic sublime is *in this instance* quite a kin brother to the Homeric.

However, it is likely that we shall here be reminded of our own challenge to the Longinian word ὑψηλον as not at all corresponding, or even alluding, to the modern word *sublime*. But in this instance the distinction will not much avail that critic; for, no matter by what particular *word* he may convey his sense of its quality, clear it is, by his way of illustrating its peculiar merit, that in his opinion these huge strides of Neptune's have something supernaturally grand about them. But, waiving this solitary instance in Homer of the sublime according to his idolatrous critics—of the pseudo-sublime according to ourselves—in all other cases

[1] On the memorable inaugural day of the Liverpool railroad, when Mr. Huskisson met with so sad a fate, a snipe or a plover tried a race with Samson, one of the engines. The race continued neck and neck for about six miles; after which the snipe, finding itself likely to come off second best, found it convenient to wheel off at a turn of the road, into the solitudes of Chat Moss.

where Longinus or any other Greek writer has cited Homer as the great exemplary model of ὕψος in composition, we are to understand him according to the Grecian sense of that word. He must then be supposed to praise Homer not so much for any ideal grandeur either of thought, image, or situation, as in a general sense for his animated style of narration, for the variety and spirited effect with which he relieves the direct formal narration in his own person by dialogue between the subjects of his narration,—thus ventriloquising, and throwing his own voice as often as he can into the surrounding objects,—or again for the similes and allusive pictures by which he points emphasis to a situation or interest to a person.

Now then we have it. When you describe Homer, or when you hear him described, as a lively picturesque old boy (by the way, why does everybody speak of Homer as old?), full of life, and animation, and movement, then you say (or you hear say) what is true, and not much more than what is true. Only about that word *picturesque* we demur a little. As a chirurgeon, he certainly *is* picturesque; for Howship upon Gunshot Wounds is a joke to him when he lectures upon *traumacy*,—if we may presume to coin that word,—or upon traumatic philosophy (as Mr. MacCulloch says so grandly "Economic Science"). But, apart from this, we cannot allow that simply to say Ζακυνθος νεμοεσσα, woody Zacynthus, is any better argument of picturesqueness than Stony Stratford or Harrow on the Hill. Be assured, reader, that the Homeric age was not ripe for the picturesque. "Price on the Picturesque" or "Gilpin on Forest Scenery" would both have been sent post-haste to bedlam in those days; or perhaps Homer himself would have tied a millstone about their necks, and have sunk them as public nuisances by woody Zante. Besides, it puts almost an extinguisher on any little twinkling of the picturesque that might have flared up at times from this or that suggestion, when each individual had his own regular epithet stereotyped to his name like a brass plate upon a door: Hector, the tamer of horses; Achilles, the swift of foot; the ox-eyed respectable Juno. Some of the "big uns," it is true, had a dress and an undress suit of epithets: as, for instance, Hector

was also κορυθαιολος, Hector with the tossing or the variegated plumes. Achilles again was διος or divine. But still the range was small, and the monotony was dire.

And now, if you come in good earnest to picturesqueness, let us mention a poet in sober truth worth five hundred of Homer; and that is Chaucer. Show us a piece of Homer's handiwork that comes within a hundred leagues of that divine prologue to the Canterbury Tales, or of "The Knight's Tale," of the "Man of Law's Tale," or of the "Tale of the Patient Griseldis," or, for intense life of narration and festive wit, of the "Wife of Bath's Tale." Or, passing out of the Canterbury Tales for the picturesque in human manner and gesture and play of countenance never equalled as yet by Pagan or Christian, go to the Troilus and Cresseid, and, for instance, to the conversation between Troilus and Pandarus, or, again, between Pandarus and Cresseid. Rightly did a critic of the 17th century pronounce Chaucer a miracle of natural genius, as having "taken into the compass of his Canterbury Tales the various manners and humours of the whole English nation in his age: not a single character has escaped him." And this critic then proceeds thus:—"The matter and manner of "these tales, and of their telling, are so suited to their different "educations, humours, and calling, that each of them would be "improper in any other mouth. Even the grave and serious "characters are distinguished by their several sorts of gravity. "Even the ribaldry of the low characters is different. But "there is such a variety of game springing up before me that "I am distracted in my choice, and know not which to follow. "It is sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that here is "God's plenty." And soon after he goes on to assert (though Heaven knows in terms far below the whole truth) the superiority of Chaucer to Boccaccio. And, in the meantime, who was this eulogist of Chaucer? Why, the man who himself was never equalled upon this earth, unless by Chaucer, in the art of fine narration. It is John Dryden whom we have been quoting.

Between Chaucer and Homer—as to the main art of narration, as to the picturesque life of the manners, and as to the exquisite delineation of character—the interval is as

wide as between Shakspere, in dramatic power, and Nic. Rowe. And we might wind up this main chapter of the comparison between Grecian and English literature,—viz. the chapter on Homer,—by this tight dilemma :—You do or you do not use the Longinian word ὕψος in the modern sense of *the sublime*. If you do not, then of course you translate it in the Grecian sense as explained above ; and in that sense we engage to produce many scores of passages from Chaucer, not exceeding 50 to 80 lines, which contain more of picturesque simplicity, more tenderness, more fidelity to nature, more felicity of sentiment, more animation of narrative, and more truth of character, than can be matched in all the Iliad or the Odyssey. On the other hand, if by ὕψος you choose absurdly to mean sublimity in the modern sense, then it will suffice for us that we challenge *you* to the production of one instance which truly and incontestably embodies that quality.[1] The burthen of proof rests upon you who affirm, not upon us who deny. Meantime, as a kind of choke-pear, we leave with the Homeric adorer this one brace of portraits, or hints for such a brace, which we commend to his comparison, as Hamlet did the portraits of the two brothers to his besotted mother.—We are talking of the sublime : that is our thesis. Now, observe : there is a catalogue in the Iliad — there is a catalogue in the Paradise Lost ; and, like the river of Macedon and of Monmouth, the two catalogues agree in that one fact—viz. that they *are* such. But, as to the rest, we are willing to abide by the issue of that one comparison, left to the very dullest sensibility, for the decision of the total question at issue. And what is that ? Not, Heaven preserve us ! as to the comparative claims of Milton and Homer in this point of sublimity—for surely it would be absurd to compare him

[1] The description of Apollo in wrath as νυκτι ἐοικως, like night, is a doubtful case. With respect to the shield of Achilles, it cannot be denied that the general conception has, in common with all abstractions (as *e.g.* the abstractions of dreams, of prophetic visions, such as that in the 6th Æneid, that to Macbeth, that shown by the angel Michael to Adam), something fine, and, in its own nature, let the execution be what it may, sublime. But this part of the Iliad we firmly believe to be an interpolation of times long posterior to that of Homer.

who has most with him whom we affirm to have none at all —but whether Homer has the very smallest pretensions in that point. The result, as we state it, is this:—The catalogue of the ruined angels in Milton is, in itself taken separately, a perfect poem, with the beauty, and the felicity, and the glory, of a dream. The Homeric catalogue of ships is exactly on a level with the muster-roll of a regiment, the register of a tax-gatherer, the catalogue of an auctioneer. Nay, some catalogues are far more interesting, and more alive with meaning. "But him followed fifty black ships"! —"But him follow seventy black ships"! Faugh! We could make a more readable poem out of an Insolvent's Balance Sheet.

One other little suggestion we could wish to offer. Those who would contend against the vast superiority of Chaucer (and him we mention chiefly because he really has in excess those very qualities of life, motion, and picturesque simplicity to which the Homeric characteristics chiefly tend) ought to bear in mind one startling fact evidently at war with the *degree* of what is claimed for Homer. It is this:—Chaucer is carried naturally by the very course of his tales into the heart of domestic life and of the scenery most favourable to the movements of human sensibility. Homer, on the other hand, is kept out of that sphere, and is imprisoned in the monotonies of a camp or a battle-field, equally by the necessities of his story, and by the proprieties of Grecian life (which in fact are pretty nearly those of Turkish life at this day). Men and women meet only under rare, hurried, and exclusive circumstances. Hence it is that throughout the entire Iliad we have but one scene in which the finest affections of the human heart can find an opening for display: of course, everybody knows at once that we are speaking of the scene between Hector, Andromache, and the young Astyanax. No need for question here; it is Hobson's choice in Greek Literature when you are seeking for the poetry of human sensibilities. One such scene there is, and no more; which, of itself, is some reason for suspecting its authenticity. And, by the way, at this point, it is worth while remarking that a late excellent critic always pronounced the words applied to Andromache,

δακρυοεν γελασασα (*tearfully smiling*, or *smiling through her tears*), a mere Alexandrian interpolation. And why? Now mark the reason. Was it because the circumstance is in itself vicious, or out of nature? Not at all: nothing more probable or more interesting under the general situation of peril combined with the little incident of the infant's alarm at the plumed helmet. But any just taste feels it to be out of the Homeric key. The barbarism of the age, not mitigated (as in Chaucer's far less barbarous age) by the tenderness of Christian sentiment, turned a deaf ear and a repulsive aspect to such beautiful traits of domestic feeling; to Homer himself the whole circumstance would have been one of pure effeminacy. Now, we recommend it to the reader's reflection; and let him weigh well the condition under which that poetry moves that cannot indulge a tender sentiment without being justly suspected of adulterous commerce with some after age. This remark, however, is by the bye,—having grown out of the δακρυοεν γελασασα, itself a digression. But, returning from that to our previous theme, we desire every candid reader to ask himself what must be the character, what the circumscription, of that poetry which is limited by its very subject [1] to a scene of such intense uniformity as a battle or a camp, and by the prevailing spirit of manners to the exclusive society of men. To make bricks without straw was the excess even of Egyptian bondage; Homer could not fight up against the necessities of his age, and the defects of its manners. And the very apologies which will be urged for him, drawn as they must be from the spirit of manners prevalent in his era, are reciprocally but so many reasons for not seeking in him the kind of poetry which has been ascribed to him by ignorance, or by defective sensibility, or by the mere self-interest of pedantry.

From Homer the route stretches thus:—The Grecian Drama lies about six hundred years nearer to the Christian era, and Pindar lies in the interval. These—*i.e.* the Dramatic

[1] But the Odyssey at least, it will be said, is not thus limited. No, not by its subject, because it carries us amongst cities and princes in a state of peace; but it is equally limited by the spirit of manners; we are never admitted amongst women, except by accident (Nausicaa)—by necessity (Penelope)—or by romance (Circe).

and Lyric—are the important chapters of the Greek Poetry; for, as to Pastoral poetry, having only Theocritus surviving, and a very little of Bion and Moschus, and of these one only being of the least separate importance, we cannot hold that department entitled to any notice in so cursory a review of the literature: else we have much to say on this also. Besides that, Theocritus was not a natural poet indigenous to Sicily, but an artificial blue-stocking; as was Callimachus in a different class.[1]

The Drama we may place loosely in the generation next before that of Alexander the Great. And his era may be best remembered by noting it as 333 years B.C. Add thirty years to this era—that will be the era of the Drama. Add a little more than a century, and that will be the era of Pindar. Him, therefore, we will notice first.

Now, the chief thing to say as to Pindar is to show cause, good and reasonable, why no man of sense should trouble his head about him. There was in the seventeenth century a notion prevalent about Pindar the very contradiction to the truth. It was imagined that he "had a demon"; that he was under a burthen of prophetic inspiration; that he was possessed, like a Hebrew prophet or a Delphic priestess, with divine fury. Why was this thought? Simply because no mortal read him. Laughable it is to mention that Pope, when a very young man, and writing his "Temple of Fame" (partly on the model of Chaucer's), when he came to the great columns and their bas-reliefs in that temple, each of which is sacred to one honoured name, having but room in all for six, chose Pindar for one[2] of the six. And the first bas-relief on Pindar's column is so pretty that we shall quote it,—especially as it suggested Gray's car for Dryden's "less presumptuous flight!"

> "Four swans sustain a car of silver bright,
> With heads advanc'd, and pinions stretch'd for flight:
> Here, *like some furious prophet*, Pindar rode,
> And seem'd to *labour with th' inspiring God.*"

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[1] Pindar, Theban lyric poet, B.C. 518-442; Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus, pastoral poets of the third century B.C.; Callimachus, Alexandrian poet of the same century.—M.

[2] The other five were Homer, Virgil, Horace, Aristotle, Cicero

Then follow eight lines describing other bas-reliefs containing "the figured games of Greece" (Olympic, Nemean, &c.) But what we spoke of as laughable in the whole affair is that Master Pope neither had then read one line of Pindar, nor ever read one line of Pindar : and reason good ; for at that time he could not read the simple Homeric Greek, while the Greek of Pindar exceeds all other Greek in difficulty, excepting perhaps a few amongst the tragic choruses, which are difficult for the very same reason—lyric abruptness, lyric involution, and lyric obscurity of transition. Not having read Homer, no wonder that Pope should place amongst the bas-reliefs illustrating the "Iliad" an incident which does not exist in the "Iliad."[1] Not having read Pindar, no wonder that Pope should ascribe to Pindar qualities which are not only imaginary, but in absolute contradiction to his true ones. A more sober old gentleman does not exist : his demoniac possession is a mere fable. But there are two sufficient arguments for not reading him, so long as innumerable books of greater interest remain unread. First, he writes upon subjects that, to us, are mean and extinct—racehorses that have been defunct for twenty-five centuries, chariots that were crazy in his own day, and contests with which it is impossible for us to sympathise. Then his digressions about old genealogies are no whit better than his main theme, nor more amusing than a Welshman's pedigree. The best translator of any age, Mr. Cary, who translated Dante, has done what human skill could effect to make the old Theban readable[2] ; but, after all, the man is yet to come who *has* read Pindar, *will* read Pindar, or *can* read Pindar,—except, indeed, a translator in the way of duty. And the son of Philip himself, though he bade "spare the house of Pindarus," we vehemently suspect, never read the works of Pindarus ; that labour he left to some future

[1] Viz. the supposed dragging of Hector three times round Troy by Achilles—a mere post-Homeric fable. But it is ludicrous to add that in after years—nay, when nearly at the end of his translation of the "Iliad" in 1718—Pope took part in a discussion upon Homer's reasons for ascribing such conduct to his hero, seriously arguing the *pro* and *con* upon a pure fiction.

[2] The Rev. Henry Francis Cary, 1772-1844, scholar, poet, and translator of Dante and Pindar.—M.

Hercules. So much for his subjects ; but a second objection is — his metre. The hexameter, or heroic metre of the ancient Greeks is delightful to our modern ears ; so is the Iambic metre, fortunately, of the stage : but the lyric metres generally, and those of Pindar without one exception, are as utterly without meaning to us, as merely chaotic labyrinths of sound, as Chinese music or Dutch concertos. Need we say more ?

Next comes the Drama. But this is too weighty a theme to be discussed slightly ; and the more so because here only we willingly concede a strong motive for learning Greek, here only we hold the want of a ready introduction to be a serious misfortune. Our general argument, therefore, which had for its drift to depreciate Greek, dispenses in this case with our saying anything,—since every word we *could* say would be hostile to our own purpose. However, we shall, even upon this field of the Greek Literature, deliver one oracular sentence, tending neither to praise nor dispraise it, but simply to state its relations to the Modern, or, at least, the English, Drama. In the ancient drama, to represent it justly, the unlearned reader must imagine grand situations, impressive groups ; in the modern tumultuous movement, a grand stream of action. In the Greek drama, he must conceive the presiding power to be *Death* ; in the English, *Life*. What Death ?—What Life ? That sort of death, or of life locked up and frozen into everlasting slumber, which we see in sculpture ; that sort of life, of tumult, of agitation, of tendency to something beyond, which we see in painting. The picturesque, in short, domineers over English tragedy ; the sculpturesque, or the statuesque, over the Grecian.

The moralists, such as Theognis, the miscellaneous or didactic poets, such as Hesiod, are all alike below any notice in a sketch like this.[1] The epigrammatists, or writers of monumental inscriptions, &c., remain ; and they, next after the dramatic poets, present the most interesting field by far in the Greek Literature ; but these are too various to be treated otherwise than *viritim* and in detail.

There remains the Prose Literature ; and, with the excep-

[1] Theognis, elegiac poet, about B.C. 570-490 ; Hesiod, in ninth century B.C.—M.

tion of those critical writers who have written on Rhetoric (such as Hermogenes, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Demetrius Phalereus, &c. &c.,[1] some of whom are the best writers extant on the mere art of constructing sentences, but could not interest the general reader), the Prose Writers may be thus distributed: 1st, the Orators; 2d, the Historians; 3d, the Philosophers; 4th, the Litterateurs (such as Plutarch, Lucian, &c.)

As to the Philosophers: of course there are only two who can present any general interest—Plato and Aristotle; for Xenophon is no more a philosophic writer than our own Addison.[2] Now, in this department, it is evident that the matter altogether transcends the manner. No man will wish to study a profound philosopher but for some previous interest in his doctrines; and, if by any means a man has obtained this, he may pursue this study sufficiently through translations. It is true that neither Sydenham nor Taylor has done justice to Plato, for example, as respects the colloquial graces of his style; but, when the object is purely to pursue a certain course of principles and inferences, the student cannot complain much that he has lost the dramatic beauties of the dialogue, or the luxuriance of the style. These he was not then seeking, by the supposition—what he *did* seek, is still left; whereas in poetry, if the golden apparel is lost, if the music has melted away from the thoughts, all, in fact, is lost. Old Hobbes, or Ogilby, is no more Homer than the score of Mozart's "Don Giovanni" is Mozart's "Don Giovanni."[3]

If, however, Grecian Philosophy presents no absolute temptations to the attainment of Greek, far less does Grecian History. If you except later historians—such as Diodorus, Plutarch, and those (like Appian, Dionysius, Dion Cassius) who wrote of Roman things and Roman persons in Greek,

[1] Hermogenes, second century after Christ; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, about A.D. 18; Demetrius Phalereus, about B.C. 345-282. —M.

[2] Plato, B.C. 428-347; Aristotle, B.C. 384-322.—M.

[3] Hobbes's translation of the Iliad and Odyssey was completed in 1675; and a translation of the Iliad was one of the works of the indefatigable bookmaker John Ogilby (1600-1676).—M.

and Polybius,[1] who comes under the same class at a much earlier period—none of whom have any interest of style, excepting only Plutarch:—these dismissed, there are but three who can rank as classical Greek historians,—*three who can lose by translation.* Of these the eldest, Herodotus,[2] is perhaps of real value. Some call him the Father of History; some call him the father of lies. Time and Major Rennel have done him ample justice. Yet here, again, see how little need of Greek for the amplest use of a Greek author. Twenty-two centuries and more have passed since the fine old man read his history at the Grecian games of Olympia. One man only has done him right, and put his enemies under his footstool; *and yet this man had no Greek.* Major Rennel read Herodotus only in the translation of Beloe. He has told us so himself. Here, then, is a little fact, my Grecian boys, that you won't easily get over. The Father of History, the eldest of prose writers, has been first explained, illustrated, justified, liberated from scandal and disgrace, first had his geography set to rights, first been translated from the region of fabulous romance, and installed in his cathedral chair as Dean (or eldest) of Historians, by a military man who had no more Greek than Shakspere, or than we (perhaps you, reader) have of the Kalmuck.

Next comes Thucydides.[3] He is the second in order of time amongst the Grecian historians who survive, and the first of those (a class which Mr. Southey, the laureate, always speaks of as the corrupters of genuine history) who affect to treat it philosophically. If the philosophic historians are not always so faithless as Mr. Southey alleges, they are, however, always guilty of dulness. Commend us to one picturesque, garrulous old fellow, like Froissart, or Philip de Comines, or Bishop Burnet, before all the philosophic prosers that ever prosed. These picturesque men will lie a little

[1] Diodorus Siculus, contemporary with Augustus Cæsar; Plutarch, about A.D. 46-120; Appian, about A.D. 98-160; Dionysius, about B.C. 18; Dion Cassius, about A.D. 155-229; Polybius, about B.C. 204-122.—M.

[2] Herodotus, B.C. 484-408. For De Quincey's fuller and better appreciation of Herodotus, see his paper "Philosophy of Herodotus" *ante*, Vol. VI.—M.

[3] B.C. 471-401.—M.

now and then, for the sake of effect—but so will the philosophers. Even Bishop Burnet, who, by the way, was hardly so much a picturesque as an anecdotal historian, was famous for his gift of lying; so diligently had he cultivated it. And the Duchess of Portsmouth told a noble lord, when inquiring into the truth of a particular fact stated by the very reverend historian, that he was notorious in Charles the Second's court, and that no man believed a word he said. But now Thucydides, though writing about his own time, and doubtless embellishing by fictions not less than his more amusing brethren, is as dull as if he prided himself on veracity. Nay, he tells us no secret anecdotes of the times,—surely there must have been many; and this proves to us that he was a low fellow without political connexions, and that he never had been behind the curtain. Now, what business had such a man to set himself up for a writer of history and a speculator on politics? Besides, his history is imperfect; and, suppose it were not, what is its subject? Why simply one single war: a war which lasted twenty-seven years, but which, after all, through its whole course was enlivened by only two events worthy to enter into General History—viz. the plague of Athens, and the miserable licking which the Athenian invaders received in Sicily. This dire overthrow dished Athens out and out; for one generation to come, there was an end of Athenian domination; and that arrogant state, under the yoke of their still baser enemies of Sparta, learned experimentally what were the evils of a foreign conquest. There was, therefore, in the domination of the Thirty Tyrants, something to "point a moral" in the Peloponnesian War: it was the judicial reaction of martial tyranny and foreign oppression, such as we of this generation have beheld in the double conquest of Paris by insulted and outraged Christendom. But nothing of all this will be found in Thucydides: he is as cool as a cucumber upon every act of atrocity, whether it be the bloody abuse of power, or the bloody retribution from the worm that, being trampled on too long, turns at last to sting and to exterminate; all alike he enters in his day-book and his ledger, posts them up to the account of brutal Spartan or polished Athenian with no more expression of his feelings (if he had any) than

a merchant making out an invoice of puncheons that are to steal away men's wits, or of frankincense and myrrh that are to ascend in devotion to the saints. Herodotus is a fine old genial boy, that, like Froissart or some of the crusading historians, kept himself in health and jovial spirits by travelling about; nor did he confine himself to Greece or the Grecian islands; but he went to Egypt, got bousy in the Pyramid of Cheops, ate a beef-steak in the hanging-gardens of Babylon, and listened to no sailors' yarns at the Piræus, which doubtless before his time had been the sole authority for Grecian legends concerning foreign lands. But, as to Thucydides, our own belief is that he lived like a monk shut up in his *museum* or study, and that at the very utmost he may have gone in the steamboat[1] to Corfu (*i.e.* Corcyra) because *that* was the island which occasioned the row of the Peloponnesian War.

Xenophon now is quite another sort of man.[2] He could use his pen; but also he could use his sword, and (when need was) his heels in running away. His Grecian history of course is a mere fraction of the General History; and, moreover, our own belief, founded upon the differences of the style, is that the work now received for his must be spurious. But in this place the question is not worth discussing. Two works remain, professedly historical, which, beyond a doubt, *are* his; and one of them the most interesting prose work by much which Athens has bequeathed us; though, by the way, Xenophon was living in a sort of elegant exile at a chateau in Thessaly, and not under Athenian protection, when he wrote it. Both of his great works relate to a Persian Cyrus, but to a Cyrus of different centuries. The "Cyropædia" is a romance, pretty much on the plan of Fenelon's "Telemaque," only (Heaven be praised!) not so furiously apoplectic. It pursues the great Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire, the Cyrus of the Jewish prophets, from his infancy to his death-bed, and describes evidently

[1] "In the steamboat!" Yes, reader, the steamboat. It is clear that there *was* one in Homer's time. See the art. *Phœacian* in the "Odyssey": if it paid then, *a fortiori* six hundred years after. The only point unknown about it is the captain's name and the state-cabin fares.

[2] Xenophon, B.C. 444-359.—M.

not any real prince according to any authentic record of his life, but, upon some basis of hints and vague traditions, improves the actual Cyrus into an ideal fiction of a sovereign and a military conqueror as he *ought* to be. One thing only we shall say of this work, though no admirers ourselves of the twaddle which Xenophon elsewhere gives us as philosophic memorabilia,—that the episode of Abradates and Panthea (especially the behaviour of Panthea after the death of her beloved hero, and the incident of the dead man's hand coming away on Cyrus grasping it) exceeds for pathos everything in Grecian Literature, always excepting the Greek Drama, and comes nearest of anything throughout Pagan Literature to the impassioned simplicity of Scripture in its tale of Joseph and his brethren. The other historical work of Xenophon is the "Anabasis." The meaning of the title is *the going up* or *ascent*—viz. of Cyrus the younger. This prince was the younger brother of the reigning king Artaxerxes, nearly two centuries from Cyrus the Great; and, from opportunity rather than a better title, and because his mother and his vast provincial government furnished him with royal treasures able to hire an army,—most of all, because he was richly endowed by nature with personal gifts—took it into his head that he would dethrone his brother, and the more so because he was only his half-brother. His chance was a good one: he had a Grecian army, and one from the very *élite* of Greece; whilst the Persian king had but a small corps of Grecian auxiliaries, long enfeebled by Persian effeminacy and Persian intermarriages. Xenophon was personally present in this expedition. And the catastrophe was most singular, such as does not occur once in a thousand years. The cavalry of the great King retreated before the Greeks continually, no doubt from policy and secret orders; so that, when a pitched battle became inevitable, the foreign invaders found themselves in the very heart of the land, and close upon the Euphrates. The battle was fought: the foreigners were victorious: they were actually singing *Te Deum* or *Io Pæan* for their victory, when it was discovered that their leader, the native prince in whose behalf they had conquered, was missing, and, soon after, that he was dead. What was to be done? The man who should

have improved their victory, and placed them at his own right hand when on the throne of Persia, was no more ; key they had none to unlock the great fortresses of the empire, none to unloose the enthusiasm of the native population. Yet such was the desperation of their circumstances that a *coup-de-main* on the capital seemed their best chance. The whole army was and felt itself a forlorn hope. To go forward was desperate, but to go back much more so ; for they had a thousand rivers without bridges in their rear ; and, if they set their faces in that direction, they would have 300,000 light cavalry upon their flanks, besides nations innumerable—

"Dusk faces with white silken turbants wreathed"—

fierce fellows who understood no Greek, and, what was worse, no joking, but well understood the use of the scimitar. Bad as things were, they soon became worse ; for the chiefs of the Grecian army, being foolish enough to accept a dinner invitation from the Persian commander-in-chief, were assassinated ; and the words of Milton became intelligible—that in the lowest deep a lower deep had opened to destroy them. In this dilemma, Xenophon, the historian of the expedition, was raised to a principal command ; and by admirable skill he led back the army by a different route to the Black Sea, on the coast of which he knew that there were Grecian colonies : and from one of these he obtained shipping, in which he coasted along (when he did not march by land) to the mouth of the Bosporus and the Dardanelles. This was the famous Retreat of the Ten Thousand ; and it shows how much defect of literary skill there was in those days amongst Grecian authors that the title of the book, "*The Going Up*," does not apply to the latter and more interesting seven-eighths of the account. The Going Up is but the preparation or preface to the Going Down, the *Anabasis* to the *Katabasis*, in which latter part it is that Xenophon plays any conspicuous part. A great political interest, however, over and above the personal interest, attaches to this expedition : for there can be no doubt that to this proof of weakness in the Persian Empire, and perhaps to this *as recorded by Xeno-*

phon, was due the expedition of Alexander in the next generation, which changed the face of the world.

The Litterateurs, as we have styled Plutarch and Lucian, though far removed from the true classical era, being both posterior to Christianity, are truly interesting. And, for Lucian in particular,[1] though he is known by reputation only as a humorous and sneering writer, we can say, upon our personal knowledge, that there are passages of more terrific effect, more German and approaching to the sublime, than anywhere else in Greek literature, out of the tragic poets. Of Plutarch we need hardly speak ; one part of his voluminous works—viz. his biographies of Greek and Roman leaders in arts [2] and arms—being so familiar to all nations, and having been selected by Rousseau as the book for him who should be limited (or, like Collins the poet, should limit himself) to one book only: a foolish choice undoubtedly, but still arguing great range of resources in Plutarch, that he should be thought of after so many myriads of modern books had widened the range of selection. Meantime, the reader is not to forget that, whatever may be his powers of amusement, a more inaccurate or faithless author as to dates, and, indeed, in all matters of research, does not exist than Plutarch. We make it a rule, whenever we see *Plut.* at the bottom of a dictionary article as the authority on which it rests, to put the better half down as a bouncer. And, in fact, Joe Miller is quite as good authority for English History as Plutarch for Roman.

Now remain the Orators ; and of these we have a right to speak, for we have read them ; and, believe us, reader, not above one or two men in a generation have. If the Editor would allow us room, we would gladly contrast them with modern orators ; and we could easily show how prodigious are the advantages of modern orators in every point which can enter into a comparison. But to what purpose? Even modern orators, with all the benefit of modern interest, and

[1] Lucian, about A.D. 120-200.—M.

[2] "In arts," we say, because great orators are amongst his heroes ; but, after all, it is very questionable whether, simply as orators, Plutarch would have noticed them. They were also statesmen ; and Mitford always treats Demosthenes as first lord of the treasury and premier. Plutarch records no poet, no artist, however brilliant.

of allusions everywhere intelligible, are not read in any generation after their own, pulpit orators only being excepted. So that, if the gods *had* made our reader a Grecian, surely he would never so far misspend his precious time, and squander his precious intellect upon old dusty quarrels, never of more value to a philosopher than a tempest in a wash-hand basin, but now stuffed with obscurities which no man can explain, and with lies to which no man can bring the counter-statement. But this would furnish matter for a separate paper.

Part II—The Greek Orators

Now let us come to the Orators. Isocrates, the eldest of those who have survived, is a mere scholastic rhetorician: for he was a timid man, and did not dare to confront the terrors of a stormy political audience; and hence, though he lived about an entire century, he never once addressed the Athenian citizens.[1] It is true that, although no *bona fide* orator—for he never *spoke* in any usual acceptation of that word, and, as a consequence, never had an opportunity of replying, which only can bring forward a man's talents as a *debater*—still he employed his pen upon real and upon existing questions of public policy, and did not, as so many generations of chamber rhetoricians continued to do in Greece, confine his powers to imaginary cases of political difficulty, or (what were tantamount to imaginary) cases fetched up from the long-past era of King Priam, or the still earlier era of the Seven Chiefs warring against the Seven-gated Thebes of Bœotia, or the half-fabulous era of the Argonauts. Isocrates was a man of sense—a patriot in a temperate way—and with something of a feeling for Greece generally, not merely a champion of Athens. His heart was given to politics; and, in an age when heavy clouds were gathering over the independence and the civil grandeur of his country, he had a disinterested anxiety for drawing off the lightning of the approaching storms by pacific counsels. Compared, therefore, with the common mercenary orators of the Athenian

[1] About Isocrates see *ante*, pp. 209-213.—M.

forum—who made a regular trade of promoting mischief by inflaming the pride, jealousy, vengeance, or the martial instincts of a "fierce democracy," and, generally speaking, with no views, high or low, sound or unsound, that looked beyond the momentary profit to themselves from thus pandering to the thoughtless nationality of a most sensitive people—Isocrates is entitled to our respect. His writings have also a separate value, as memorials of political transactions from which the historian has gathered many useful hints; and, perhaps, to a diligent search, they might yield more. But, considered as an orator—if that title can be with any propriety allowed to one who declaimed only in his closet—one who, in relation to public affairs, was what, in England, when speaking of practical jurisprudence, we call a Chamber Counsel—Isocrates is languid, and with little of anything characteristic in his manner to justify a separate consideration. It is remarkable that he, beyond all other rhetoricians of that era, cultivated the *rhythmus* of his periods. And to this object he sacrificed not only an enormity of time, but, I have no doubt, in many cases, the freedom and natural movement of the thoughts. My reason, however, for noticing this peculiarity in Isocrates is by way of fixing the attention upon the superiority, even for artificial ornaments, of downright practical business and the realities of political strife over the torpid atmosphere of a study or a school. Cicero, long after, had the same passion for *numerositas*, and the full, pompous rotundity of cadence. But in Cicero all habits and all faculties were nursed by the daily practice of life and its impassioned realities in the forum or in the senate. What is the consequence? Why this—that, whereas in the most laboured performance of Isocrates (which cost him, I think, one whole *decennium*, or period of ten years) few modern ears are sensible of any striking art, or any great result of harmony, in Cicero, on the other hand, the fine, sonorous modulations of his periodic style are delightful to the dullest ear of any European. Such are the advantages from real campaigns, from the unsimulated strife of actual stormy life, over the torpid dreams of what the Romans called an *umbratic*[1] experience.

[1] "*Umbratic*":—I have perhaps elsewhere drawn the attention of

Isocrates I have noticed as the oldest of the surviving Greek orators: Demosthenes, of course, claims a notice more emphatically, as, by universal consent of Athens, and afterwards of Rhodes, of Rome, and other impartial judges, the greatest, or, at least, the most comprehensively great. For, by the way, it must not be forgotten—though modern critics *do* forget this rather important fact in weighing the reputation of Demosthenes—he was not esteemed in his own day as the greatest in that particular quality of energy and demoniac power (δεινοτης) which is generally assumed to have been his leading characteristic and his *forte*, not only by comparison with his own compatriots, but even with Cicero and the greatest men of the Roman bar. It was not of Demosthenes that the Athenians were accustomed to say "he thunders and lightens," but of Pericles, an elder orator; and even amongst the written oratory of Greece which still survives (for, as to the speeches ascribed to Pericles by Thucydides, I take it for granted that, as usual, these were mere forgeries of the historian) there is a portion which perhaps exceeds Demosthenes in the naked quality of vehemence. But this, I admit, will not impeach his supremacy; for it is probable that, wherever an orator is characterised exclusively by turbulent power, or at least remembered chiefly for that quality, all the other numerous graces of eloquence were wanting to that man, or existed only in a degree which made no equipoise to his insulated gift of Jovian terror. The Gracchi, amongst the Roman orators, were probably more properly "sons of thunder" than Crassus or Cicero, or even than Cæsar himself,—whose oratory, by the way, was in this respect like his own character and infinite accomplishments, so that even by Cicero it is rarely cited without the epithet of splendid, magnificent, &c. We must suppose, therefore, that neither Cicero nor Demosthenes was held to be at the

readers to the peculiar effects of climate in shaping the modes of our thinking and imaging. A life of *inertia*, which retreats from the dust and toil of actual experience, we (who represent the idea of effeminacy more naturally by the image of shrinking from cold) call a chimney-corner or a fireside experience; but the Romans, to whom the same effeminacy more easily fell under the idea of shrinking from the heat of the sun, called it an experience won in the shade, and a mere scholastic student they called an *umbraticus doctor*.

head of their respective fields in Rome and Athens in right of any absolute pre-eminence in the one leading power of an orator—viz. native and fervent vigour—but in right of a large comprehensive harmony of gifts, leaving possibly to some other orators, elder or rival to themselves, a superiority in each of an orator's talents taken apart, but claiming the supremacy, nevertheless, upon the whole, by the systematic union of many qualities tending to one result: pleasing the taste by the harmonious *coup d'œil* from the total assemblage, and also adapting itself to a far larger variety of situations; for, after all, the *mere* son of thunder is disarmed, and apt to become ridiculous, if you strip him of a passionate cause, of a theme saturated with human strife, and of an excitable or tempestuous audience.[1]

Such an audience, however, it will be said that Demosthenes had, and sometimes (but not very often in those orations which survive) such a theme. As to his audience, certainly it was all that could be wished in point of violence and combustible passion; but also it was something more. A mighty advantage it is, doubtless, to an orator, when he sees and hears his own kindling passions instantaneously reflected in the blazing eyes and fiery shouts (the *fremitus*) of his audience—when he sees a whole people, personally or by deputation, swayed backwards and forwards, like a field of corn in a breeze, by the movements of his own appeals. But, unfortunately, in the Athenian audience, the ignorance, the headstrong violence of prejudice, the arrogance, and, above all, the levity of the national mind, presented, to an orator the most favourite, a scene like that of an ocean always rocking with storms; like a wasp always angry; like a

[1] In spite of all that De Quincey here says, δεινοτης or "tremendousness" was the quality noted as specially characterising the eloquence of Demosthenes. Περὶ τῆς τοῦ Δημοσθένους δεινότητος, "Of the tremendousness of Demosthenes," is the title of a criticism on him by the rhetorician Dionysius of Halicarnassus; and it was said of him that he was a man "whose food was shields and steel." No one can now read, even in translation, such a passage as that on the distinction between the real statesman and the sycophant in the speech "Concerning the Crown"—a passage as noble intellectually as it is morally, and the very perfection of Attic density and fineness in expression—without feeling the reasons for the tradition of the supreme greatness of Demosthenes among the orators of the world.—M.

lunatic, always coming out of a passion or preparing to go into one. Well might Demosthenes prepare himself by sea-shore practice ; in which I conceive that his purpose must have been, not so much (according to the common notion) to overcrow the noise of the forum as to *stand fire* (if I may so express it) against the uproarious demonstrations of mob fury.

This quality of an Athenian audience must very seriously have interfered with the intellectual display of an orator. Not a word could he venture to say in the way of censure towards the public will—not even hypothetically to insinuate a fault ; not a syllable could he utter even in the way of dissent from the favourite speculations of the moment. If he did, instantly a roar of menaces recalled him to a sense even of personal danger. And, again, the mere vivacity of his audience, requiring perpetual amusement and variety, compelled a man, as great even as Demosthenes, to curtail his arguments, and rarely indeed to pursue a theme with the requisite fulness of development or illustration,—a point in which the superior dignity and the far less fluctuating mobility of the Roman mind gave an immense advantage to Cicero.

Demosthenes, in spite of all the weaknesses which have been arrayed against his memory by the hatred of his contemporaries, or by the anti-republican feelings of such men as Mitford, was a great man and an honest man. He rose above his countrymen. He despised, in some measure, his audience ; and, at length, in the palmy days of his influence, he would insist on being heard ; he would insist on telling the truth, however unacceptable ; he would not, like the great rout of venal haranguers, lay any flattering unction to the capital distempers of the public mind ; he would point out their errors, and warn them of their perils. But this upright character of the man, victorious over his constitutional timidity, does but the more brightly illustrate the local law and the tyranny of the public feeling. How often do we find him, when on the brink of uttering "odious truth," obliged to pause, and to propitiate his audience with deprecatory phrases, entreating them to give him time for utterance, not to yell him down before they had heard his sentence to the end. Μη θορυβειτε—"Gentlemen of Athens ! for the

love of God, do not make an uproar at what I am going to say! Gentlemen of Athens! humbly I beseech you to let me finish my sentence!" Such are his continual appeals to the better feelings of his audience. Now, it is very evident that, in such circumstances, no man could do justice to any subject. At least, when speaking not before a tribunal of justice, but before the people in council assembled—that is in effect, on his greatest stage of all—Demosthenes (however bold at times and restive in a matter which he held to be paramount) was required to bend, and did bend, to the local genius of democracy, reinforced by a most mercurial temperament. The very air of Attica, combined with great political power, kept its natives in a state of habitual intoxication; and even wise men would have had some difficulty in mastering, as it affected themselves, the permanent bias towards caprice and insolence.

Is this state of things at all taken into account in our modern critiques upon Demosthenes? The upshot of what I can find in most modern lecturers upon rhetoric and style, French or English, when speaking of Demosthenes, is this notable simile, by way of representing the final effect of his eloquence,—"that, like a mountain torrent, swollen by melting snow, or by rain, it carries all things before it." Prodigiously original! and exceedingly discriminative! As if such an illustration would not equally represent the effect of a lyrical poem, of Mozart's music, of a stormy chorus, or any other form whatever of impassioned vehemence! Meantime, I suspect grievously that not one of these critics has ever read a paragraph of Demosthenes. Nothing do you ever find quoted but a few notorious passages about Philip of Macedon, and the too-famous oath by the manes of those that died at Marathon.[1] I call it too famous, because (like Addison's comparison of Marlborough at Blenheim to the angel in the storm—of which a schoolmaster then living said that nine out of every ten boys would have hit upon it

[1] "Never, never, can ye have done wrong, O men of Athens, in undertaking the battle for the freedom and safety of all,—no: I swear it by your forefathers: those that met the peril at Marathon, those that took the field at Platæa, those in the sea-fight at Salamis, and those at Artemisium!"—*Speech concerning the Crown.*—M.

in a school exercise [1]) it has no peculiar boldness, and must have occurred to every Athenian of any sensibility every day of his life. Hear, on the other hand, a modern oath, and (what is most remarkable) an oath sworn in the pulpit. A dissenting clergyman (I believe, a Baptist), preaching at Cambridge, and having ocasion to affirm or to deny something or other, upon his general confidence in the grandeur of man's nature, the magnificence of his conceptions, the immensity of his aspirations, &c., delivered himself thus :—"By the greatness of human ideals—by the greatness of human aspirations —by the immortality of human creations—*by the Iliad—by the Odyssey*!"——Now, that *was* bold, startling, sublime. But, in the other case, neither was the oath invested with any great pomp of imagery or expression ; nor, if it had—which is more to the purpose—was such an oath at all representative of the peculiar manner belonging to Demosthenes. It is always a rude and inartificial style of criticism to cite from an author that which, whether fine or not in itself, is no fair specimen of his ordinary style.

What, then, *is* the characteristic style of Demosthenes? It is one which grew naturally, as did his defects (by which I mean faults of *omission*, in contradiction to such as are positive), from the composition of his audience. His audience, comprehending so much ignorance, and, above all, so much high-spirited impatience,—being, in fact, always on the fret,—kept the orator always on the fret. Hence arose short sentences ; hence the impossibility of the long, voluminous

[1] "'Twas then great Marlborough's mighty soul was proved,
That, in the shock of charging hosts unmoved,
Amidst confusion, horror, and despair,
Examined all the dreadful scenes of war ;
In peaceful thought the field of death surveyed,
To fainting squadrons sent the timely aid,
Suffered repulsed battalions to engage,
And taught the doubtful battle where to rage.
So, when an angel by divine command
With rising tempests shakes a guilty land,
Such as of late o'er pale Britannia passed,
Calm and serene he drives the furious blast,
And, pleased the Almighty's orders to perform,
Rides on the whirlwind, and directs the storm."
The Campaign.—M.

sweeps of beautiful rhythmus which we find in Cicero; hence the animated form of apostrophe and crowded interrogations addressed to the audience. This gives, undoubtedly, a spirited and animated character to the style of Demosthenes: but it robs him of a large variety of structure applied to the logic, or the embellishment, or the music of his composition. His style is full of life, but not (like Cicero's) full of pomp and continuous grandeur. On the contrary, as the necessity of rousing attention, or of sustaining it, obliged the Attic orator to rely too much on the *personality* of direct question to the audience, and to use brief sentences, so also the same impatient and fretful irritability forbade him to linger much upon an idea—to theorize, to speculate, or, generally, to quit the direct business path of the question then under consideration—no matter for what purpose of beauty, dignity, instruction, or even of *ultimate* effect. In all things, the *immediate*—the instant—the *præsens præsentissimum*, was kept steadily before the eye of the Athenian orator by the mere coercion of self-interest.

And hence, by the way, arises one most important feature of distinction between Grecian oratory (political oratory at least) on the one hand, and Roman (to which, in this point, we may add British) on the other. A Roman lawyer, senator, or demagogue even, under proper restrictions—a British member of parliament, or even a candidate from the hustings—but, most assuredly, and by the evidence of many a splendid example, an advocate addressing a jury—may embellish his oration with a wide circuit of historical, or of antiquarian, nay, even speculative, discussion. Every Latin scholar will remember the leisurely and most facetious, the good-natured and respectful, yet keenly satiric, picture which the great Roman barrister draws of the Stoic philosophy, by way of *rowing* old Cato, who professed that philosophy with too little indulgence for venial human errors. The *judices*—that is, in effect, the jury—were tickled to the soul by seeing the grave Marcus Cato badgered with this fine razor-like raillery; and there can be no doubt that, by flattering the self-respect of the jury in presuming them susceptible of so much wit from a liberal kind of knowledge, and by really delighting them with such a display of adroit teasing applied

to a man of scenical gravity, this whole scene, though quite extrajudicial and travelling out of the record, was highly useful in conciliating the good-will of Cicero's audience.[1] The same style of liberal *excursus* from the more thorny path of the absolute business before the court has been often and memorably practised by great English barristers: as in the trial of Sacheverell by many of the managers for the Commons; by "the fluent Murray" on various occasions; in the great cause of impeachment against our English Verres (or, at least, Verres as to the situation, though not the guilt), Mr. Hastings; in many of Mr. Erskine's addresses to juries, where political rights were at stake; in Sir James Mackintosh's defence of Peltier for a libel upon Napoleon, when he went into a history of the press as applied to politics (a liberal inquiry, but which, except in the remotest manner, could not possibly bear upon the mere question of fact before the jury); and in many other splendid instances which have really made *our* trials and the annals of *our* criminal jurisprudence one great fund of information and authority to the historian. In the senate I need not say how much farther, and more frequently, this habit of large generalisation, and of liberal excursion from perhaps a lifeless theme, has been carried by great masters: in particular, by Edmund Burke, who carried it, in fact, to such excess, and to a point which threatened so much to disturb the movement of public business, that, from that cause more perhaps than from rude insensibility to the value of his speculations, he put his audience sometimes in motion for dinner, and acquired (as is well known) the surname of the Dinner Bell.[2]

Now, in the Athenian audience all this was impossible. Neither in political nor in forensic harangues was there any licence by rule, or any indulgence by usage, or any special privilege by personal favour, to the least effort at improving an individual case of law or politics into general views of jurisprudence, of statesmanship, of diplomacy; no collateral

[1] The reference is to Cicero's speech *Pro L. Murena.*—M.

[2] Yet this story has been exaggerated; and, I believe, in strict truth, the whole case arose out of some fretful expressions of ill-temper on the part of Burke, and that the name was a retort from a man of wit who had been personally stung by a sarcasm of the offended orator.

discussions were tolerated—no illustrative details—no historical parallelisms—still less any philosophical moralisations. The slightest show of any tendency in these directions was summarily nipped in the bud: the Athenian gentlemen began to θορυβεῖν in good earnest if a man showed symptoms of entering upon any discussion whatever that was not intensely needful and pertinent in the first place, or which, in the second place, was not of a nature to be wound up in two sentences when a summons should arise either to dinner, or to the theatre, or to the succession of some variety anticipated from another orator.

Hence, therefore, finally arises one great peculiarity of Greek eloquence, and a most unfortunate one for its chance of ever influencing a remote posterity, or, in any substantial sense, of its ever surviving in the real unaffected admiration of us moderns,—that it embodies no alien, no collateral information as to manners, usages, modes of feeling, no extrinsic ornament, no side glimpses into Grecian life, no casual historical details. The cause and nothing but the cause, the political question and nothing but the question, pealed for ever in the ears of the terrified orator,—always on sufferance, always on his good behaviour, always afraid, for the sake of his party or of his client, lest his auditors should become angry, or become impatient, or become weary. And from that intense fear, trammelling the freedom of his steps at every turn, and overruling every motion to the right or to the left, in pure servile anxiety for the mood and disposition of his tyrannical master, arose the very opposite result for us of this day,—that we, by the very means adopted to prevent weariness in the immediate auditors, find nothing surviving in Grecian orations but what *does* weary *us* insupportably through its want of all general interest, and, even amongst private or instant details of politics or law, presenting us with none that throw light upon the spirit of manners, or the Grecian peculiarities of feeling. Probably an Athenian mob would not have cared much at the prospect of such a result to posterity, and, at any rate, would not have sacrificed one atom of their ease or pleasure to obviate such a result; but to an Athenian orator this result would have been a sad one to contemplate. The final

consequence is that, whilst all men find, or may find, infinite amusement, and instruction of the most liberal kind, in that most accomplished of statesmen and orators, the Roman Cicero—nay, would doubtless, from the causes assigned, have found, in their proportion, the same attractions in the speeches of the elder Antony, of Hortensius, of Crassus, and other contemporaries or immediate predecessors of Cicero—no person ever reads Demosthenes, still less any other Athenian orator, with the slightest interest beyond that which inevitably attaches to the words of one who wrote his own divine language with probably very superior skill.

But from all this results a further inference—viz. the dire affectation of those who pretend an enthusiasm in the oratory of Demosthenes, and also a plenary consolation to all who are obliged, from ignorance of Greek, to dispense with that novelty. If it be a luxury at all, it is and can be one for those only who cultivate verbal researches and the pleasures of philology.

Even in the oratory of our own times, which oftentimes discusses questions to the whole growth and motion of which we have been ourselves parties present or even accessary, questions which we have followed in their first emersion and separation from the clouds of general politics,—their advance, slow or rapid, towards a domineering interest in the public passions; their meridian altitude; and perhaps their precipitous descent downwards, whether from the consummation of their objects (as in the questions of the Slave Trade, of Catholic Emancipation, of East India Monopoly), or from a partial victory and compromise with the abuse (as in the purification of that Augean stable, prisons, and, still more, private houses for the insane), or from the accomplishment of one stage or so in a progress which by its nature is infinite (as in the various steps taken towards the improvement and towards the extension of education):—even in cases like these, when the primary and ostensible object of the speaker already on its own account possesses a commanding attraction, yet will it often happen that the secondary questions growing out of the leading one, the great elementary themes suggested to the speaker by the concrete case before him—as, for instance, the general question of Test Laws, or the

still higher and transcendent question of Religious Toleration and the relations between the State and religious opinions, or the general history of Slavery and the commerce in the human species, the general principles of Economy as applied to monopolies, the past usages of mankind in their treatment of prisoners or of lunatics—these comprehensive and transcendent themes are continually allowed to absorb and throw into the shade for a time the minor but more urgent question of the moment through which they have gained their interest. The capital and primary interest gives way for a time to the derivative interest; and it does so by a silent understanding between the orator and his audience. The orator is well assured that he will not be taxed with wandering; the audience are satisfied that, eventually, they will not have lost their time; and the final result is to elevate and liberalise the province of oratory, by exalting mere business (growing originally, perhaps, out of contingencies of finance, or trade, or local police) into a field for the higher understanding, and giving to the mere necessities of our position as a nation the dignity of great problems for civilising wisdom or philosophic philanthropy. Look back to the superb orations of Edmund Burke on questions limited enough in themselves, sometimes merely personal,—for instance, that on American Taxation, on the Reforms in our Household or Official Expenditure, or at that from the Bristol hustings (by its *prima facie* subject, therefore, a mere electioneering harangue to a mob)! With what marvellous skill does he enrich what is meagre, elevate what is humble, intellectualise what is purely technical, delocalise what is local, generalise what is personal! And with what result? Doubtless, to the absolute contemporaries of those speeches, steeped to the very lips in the passions besetting their topics, even to those whose attention was sufficiently secured by the domineering interest, friendly or hostile, to the views of the speaker—even to these I say that, in so far as they were at all capable of an intellectual pleasure, those parts would be most attractive which were least occupied with the present business and the momentary details. This order of precedency in the interests of the speech held even for them; but to us, removing at every annual step we take in the century to a greater distance

from the mere business and partisan interests of the several cases, this secondary attraction is not merely the greater of the two: to us it has become pretty nearly the sole one, pretty nearly the exclusive attraction.

As to religious oratory, *that* stands upon a different footing, —the questions afloat in that province of human speculation being eternal, or at least essentially the same under new forms. This receives a strong illustration from the annals of the English Senate, to which also it *gives* a strong and useful illustration. Up to the era of James I. the eloquence of either House could not, for political reasons, be very striking, on the very principle which we have been enforcing. Parliament met only for dispatch of business; and that business was purely fiscal, or (as at times it happened) judicial. The constitutional functions of Parliament were narrow; and they were narrowed still more severely by the jealousy of the executive government. With the expansion, or rather first growth and development, of a gentry, or third estate, expanded, *pari passu*, the political field of their jurisdiction and their deliberative functions. This widening field, as a birth out of new existences unknown to former laws or usages, was, of course, not contemplated by those laws or usages. Constitutional law could not provide for the exercise of rights by a body of citizens when as yet that body had itself no existence. A gentry, as the depository of a vast overbalance of property, real as well as personal, had not matured itself till the latter years of James I. Consequently the new functions which the instinct of their new situation prompted them to assume were looked upon by the Crown, most sincerely, as unlawful usurpations. This led, as we know, to a most fervent and impassioned struggle, the most so of any struggle which has ever armed the hands of men with the sword. For the passions take a far profounder sweep when they are supported by deep thought and high principles.

This element of fervid strife was already, for itself, an atmosphere most favourable to political eloquence. Accordingly, the speeches of that day, though generally too short to attain that large compass and sweep of movement without which it is difficult to kindle or to sustain any conscious enthusiasm in an audience, were of a high quality as to

thought and energy of expression, as high as their circumstantial disadvantages allowed. Lord Strafford's great effort is deservedly admired to this day, and the latter part of it has been often pronounced a *chef-d'œuvre*.[1] A few years before that era, all the orators of note were, and must have been, judicial orators; and, amongst these, Lord Bacon, to whom every reader's thoughts will point as the most memorable, attained the chief object of all oratory, if what Ben Jonson reports of him be true,—that he had his audience passive to the motions of his will.[2] But Jonson was, perhaps, too scholastic a judge to be a fair representative judge; and, whatever he might choose to say or to think, Lord Bacon was certainly too weighty—too massy with the bullion of original thought—ever to have realized the idea of a great popular orator, one who

"Wielded at will a fierce democracy,"

and ploughed up the great deeps of sentiment, or party strife, or national animosities, like a Levanter or a monsoon. In the schools of Plato, in the *palæstra Stoicorum*, such an orator might be potent; not *in fœce Romuli*. If he had laboured with no other defect, had he the gift of tautology? Could he say the same thing three times over in direct sequence? For, without this talent of iteration—of repeating the same thought in diversified forms—a man may utter good heads of an oration, but not an oration. Just as the same illustrious man's Essays are good hints, useful topics, for essays, but no approximation to what we, in modern days, understand by *essays*: they are, as an eminent author once happily

[1] The reference is to the peroration of the Earl of Strafford's speech on his impeachment before the House of Lords for high treason, 13th April 1641.—M.

[2] "There happened in my time one noble speaker, who was full of gravity in his speaking. His language (where he could spare or pass by a jest) was nobly censorious. No man ever spake more neatly, more pressly, more weightily, or suffered less emptiness, less idleness, in what he uttered. No member of his speech but consisted of his own graces. His hearers could not cough, or look aside from him, without loss. He commanded when he spoke, and had his judges angry and pleased at his devotion. No man had these affections more in his power. The fear of every man that heard him was lest he should make an end."—Ben Jonson's *Discoveries*.—M.

expressed it to myself, "*seeds, not plants or shrubs; acorns, that is, oaks in embryo, but not oaks.*"

Reverting, however, to the oratory of the Senate, from the era of its proper birth, which we may date from the opening of our memorable Long Parliament, brought together in November of 1640,[1] our Parliamentary eloquence has now, within four years, travelled through a period of two centuries. A most admirable subject for an essay, or a magazine article, as it strikes me, would be a bird's-eye view —or rather a bird's-wing flight—pursuing rapidly the revolutions of that memorable Oracle (for such it really was to the rest of civilized Europe), which, through so long a course of years, like the Delphic Oracle to the nations of old, delivered counsels of civil prudence and of national grandeur that kept alive for Christendom the recollections of freedom, and refreshed to the enslaved Continent the old ideas of Roman patriotism, which, but for our Parliament, would have uttered themselves by no voices on earth. That this account of the position occupied by our British Parliament in relation to the rest of Europe, at least after the publication of the Debates had been commenced by Cave with the aid of Dr. Johnson,[2] is, in no respect, romantic or overcharged, may be learned from the German novels of the last century, in which we find the British debates as uniformly the morning accompaniment of breakfast at the houses of the rural gentry, &c., as in any English or Scottish county. Such a

[1] There was another Parliament of this same year 1640, which met in the spring (April, I think), but was summarily dissolved. A small quarto volume, of not unfrequent occurrence, I believe, contains some good specimens of the eloquence then prevalent. It was rich in thought, never wordy—in fact, too parsimonious in words and illustrations; and it breathed a high tone of religious principle as well as of pure-minded patriotism; but, for the reason stated above—its narrow circuit and very limited duration—the general character of the Parliamentary eloquence was ineffective. [I have changed "1642" in the original in *Tait* into 1640; which is the correct date. Specimens of the speeches in the Long Parliament will be found in the *Parliamentary History*. —M.]

[2] It was in 1738 that Johnson became a regular coadjutor to Edward Cave, proprietor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and began to furnish for that periodical in disguised form what might pass for reports or summaries of the debates in both Houses of Parliament.—M.

sketch would, of course, collect the characteristics of each age, show in what connexion these characteristics stood with the political aspects of the time, or with the modes of managing public business (a fatal rock to our public eloquence in England !), and illustrate the whole by interesting specimens from the leading orators in each generation : from Hampden to Pulteney, amongst oppositionists or patriots ; from Pulteney to O'Connell ; or, again, amongst Ministers, from Hyde to Somers, from Lord Sunderland to Lords Oxford and Bolingbroke ; and from the plain, downright Sir Robert Walpole, to the plain, downright Sir Robert Peel.

Throughout the whole of this review the same "moral," if one might so call it, would be apparent—viz. that in proportion as the oratory was high and intellectual did it travel out into the collateral questions of less instant necessity, but more durable interest, and that, in proportion as the Grecian necessity *was* or was *not* enforced by the temper of the House or by the pressure of public business—the necessity which cripples the orator by confining him within the severe limits of the case before him—in that proportion had or had not the oratory of past generations a surviving interest for modern posterity. Nothing, in fact, so utterly effete—not even old law, or old pharmacy, or old erroneous chemistry—nothing so insufferably dull, as political orations, unless when powerfully animated by that spirit of generalization which only gives the breath of life and the salt which preserves from decay through every age alike. The very strongest proof, as well as exemplification, of all which has been said on Grecian oratory may thus be found in the records of the British Senate.

And this, by the way, brings us round to an aspect of Grecian Oratory which has been rendered memorable, and forced upon our notice, in the shape of a problem, by the most popular of our native historians—the aspect, I mean, of Greek Oratory in comparison with English. Hume has an essay upon the subject [1] ; and the true answer to that essay will open a wide field of truth to us. In this little paper Hume assumes the superiority of Grecian eloquence, as a thing admitted on all hands, and requiring no proof. Not

[1] "*Of Eloquence*" is the title of the essay.—M.

the proof of this point did he propose to himself as his object; not even the illustration of it. No. All *that* Hume held to be superfluous. His object was to investigate the causes of this Grecian superiority; or, if *investigate* is too pompous a word for so slight a discussion, more properly, he inquired for the cause as something that must naturally lie upon the surface.

What is the answer? First of all, before looking for causes, a man should be sure of his facts. Now, as to the main fact at issue, I utterly deny the superiority of Grecian eloquence. And, first of all, I change the whole field of inquiry by shifting the comparison. The Greek oratory is all political or judicial: we have those also; but the best of our eloquence, by immeasurable degrees the noblest and richest, is our religious eloquence. Here, of course, all comparison ceases; for classical Grecian religious eloquence, in Grecian attire, there is none until three centuries after the Christian era, when we have three great orators: Gregory Nazianzen, Basil—of which two I have a very fixed opinion, having read large portions of both—and a third, of whom I know nothing. To our Jeremy Taylor, to our Sir Thomas Browne, there is no approach made in the Greek eloquence.[1] The inaugural chapter of the "Holy Dying," to say nothing of many another golden passage; or the famous passage in the "Urn Burial," beginning—"Now, since these bones have rested under the drums and tramplings of three conquests"—have no parallel in literature. The winding-up of the former is more, in its effect, like a great tempestuous chorus from the Judas Maccabeus, or from Spohr's St. Paul, than like human eloquence.

But, grant that this transfer of the comparison is unfair, still, it is no less unfair to confine the comparison on our part to the weakest part of our oratory. But no matter—let issue be joined even here. Then we may say at once that, for the intellectual qualities of eloquence,—in fineness of understanding, in depth and in large compass of thought,—Burke far surpasses any orator, ancient or modern. But, if the comparison were pushed more widely, very certain I am

[1] For De Quincey more at large on Jeremy Taylor and Sir Thomas Browne, see *ante*, pp. 104-109.—M.

that, apart from classical prejudice, no qualities of just thinking, or fine expression, or even of artificial ornament, could have been assigned by Hume in which the great body of our deliberative and forensic orators fall short of Grecian models; though I will admit that, by comparison with the Roman model of Cicero, there is seldom the same artful prefiguration of the oration throughout its future course, or the same sustained rhythmus and oratorial tone. The qualities of art are nowhere so prominently expressed, nowhere aid the effect so much, as in the great Roman master.

But, as to Greece, let us now, in one word, unveil the sole advantage which the eloquence of the Athenian assembly has over that of the English senate. It is this:—*the public business of Athens was as yet simple and unencumbered by details;* the dignity of the occasion was scenically sustained. But, in England, the vast intricacy and complex interweaving of property, of commerce, of commercial interests, of details infinite in number and infinite in littleness, break down and fritter away into fractions and petty minutiæ the whole huge labyrinth of our public affairs. It is scarcely necessary to explain my meaning. In Athens, the question before the public assembly was, peace or war—before our House of Commons, perhaps the Exchequer Bills Bill; at Athens, a league or no league—in England, the Tithe of Agistment Commutation-Bills Renewal Bill; in Athens—shall we forgive a ruined enemy? in England—shall we cancel the tax on farthing rushlights? In short, with us, the infinity of details overlays the simplicity and grandeur of our public deliberations.

Such was the advantage—a mighty advantage—for Greece. Now, finally, for the use made of this advantage! To that point I have already spoken. By the clamorous and undeliberative qualities of the Athenian political audience, by its fitful impatience, and vehement arrogance, and fervid partisanship, all wide and general discussion was barred *in limine.* And thus occurred this singular inversion of positions:—The greatest of Greek orators was obliged to treat these catholic questions as mere Athenian questions of business. On the other hand, the least eloquent of British senators, whether from the immense advance in knowledge, or from the custom

and usage of Parliament, seldom fails, more or less, to elevate his intense details of pure technical business into something dignified, either by the necessities of pursuing the *historical* relations of the matter in discussion, or of arguing its merits as a case of general finance, or as connected with general political economy, or perhaps in its bearings on peace or war. The Grecian was forced, by the composition of his headstrong auditory, to degrade and personalise his grand themes ; the Englishman is forced, by the difference of his audience, by old prescription, and by the opposition of a well-informed hostile party, into elevating his merely technical and petty themes into great national questions, involving honour and benefit to tens of millions.

THEORY OF GREEK TRAGEDY[1]

THE Greek Tragedy is a dark problem. We cannot say that the Greek Drama as a whole is such in any more comprehensive sense; for the Comedy of Greece depends essentially upon the same principles as our own. Comedy, as the reflex of social life, will shift in correspondence to the shifting movements of civilisation. Inevitably, as human intercourse in cities grows more refined, Comedy will grow more subtle; it will build itself on distinctions of character less grossly defined, and on features of manners more delicate and impalpable. But the *fundus*, the ultimate resource, the well-head, of the comic, must for ever be sought in one and the same field,—viz. the ludicrous of incident, or the ludicrous of situation, or the ludicrous which arises in a mixed way between the character and the situation. The age of Aristophanes, for example, answered in some respects to our own earliest dramatic era, viz. from 1588 to 1635,—an age not (as Dr. Johnson assumes it to have been in his elaborate Preface to Shakspere) rude or gross; on the contrary, far more intense with intellectual instincts and agencies than his own, which was an age of collapse. But in the England of Shakspere, as in the Athens of Aristophanes, the surface of society in cities still rocked, or at least undulated, with the ground-swell surviving from periods of intestine tumult and insecurity. The times were still martial and restless;

[1] Appeared first in *Blackwood* for February 1840 (which number of *Blackwood* contained also the first portion of the paper on the Essenes): reprinted by De Quincey in 1858 in vol. ix of his Collective Edition of his Writings.—M.

men still wore swords in pacific assemblies ; the intellect of the age was a fermenting intellect ; it was a revolutionary intellect. And Comedy itself, coloured by the moving pageantries of life, was more sinewy, more audacious in its movements ; spoke with something more of an impassioned tone ; and was hung with draperies more rich, more voluminous, more picturesque. On the other hand, the age of the Athenian Menander, or the English Congreve, though still an unsettled age, was far less insecure in its condition of police, and far less showy in its exterior aspect. In England, it is true that a picturesque costume still prevailed : the whole people were still draped[1] professionally ; each man's dress proclaimed his calling ; and so far it might be said "Natio comœda est."[2] But the characteristic and dividing spirit had fled, whilst the forms survived ; and those middle men had universally arisen whose equivocal relations to different employments broke down the strength of contrast between them. Comedy, therefore, was thrown more exclusively upon the interior man,—upon the *nuances* of his nature, or upon the finer spirit of his manners. It was now the acknowledged duty of Comedy to fathom the coynesses of human nature, and to arrest the fleeting phenomena of human demeanour.

But Tragedy stood upon another footing. Whilst the comic muse in every age acknowledges a relationship which is more than sisterly—in fact, little short of absolute identity —the tragic muses of Greece and England stand so far aloof as hardly to recognise each other under any common designation. Few people have ever studied the Grecian Drama ; and hence may be explained the possibility that so little should have been said by critics upon its characteristic differences, and nothing at all upon the philosophic ground of these differences. Hence may be explained the fact that,

[1] "*The whole people were still draped professionally*" :—For example, even in Queen Anne's reign, or so late as that of George I, physicians never appeared without the insignia of their calling ; clergymen would have incurred the worst suspicions had they gone into the streets without a gown and bands. Ladies, again, universally wore masks, as the sole substitute known to our ancestors for the modern parasol,—a fact perhaps not generally known.

[2] A saying of Juvenal about the Greeks.—M.

whilst Greek Tragedy has always been a problem in criticism, it is still a problem of which no man has attempted the solution. This problem it is our intention briefly to investigate.

I. There are cases occasionally occurring in the English Drama and the Spanish where a play is exhibited within a play. To go no further, every person remembers the remarkable instance of this in Hamlet. Sometimes the same thing takes place in painting. We see a chamber, suppose, exhibited by the artist, on the walls of which (as a customary piece of furniture) hangs a picture. And, as this picture again might represent a room furnished with pictures, in the mere logical possibility of the case we might imagine this descent into a life below a life going on *ad infinitum*. Practically, however, the process is soon stopped. A retrocession of this nature is difficult to manage. The original picture is a mimic, an unreal, life. But this unreal life is itself a real life with respect to the secondary picture; which again must be supposed realized with relation to the tertiary picture, if such a thing were attempted. Consequently, at every step of the *introvolution* (to neologise a little in a case justifying a neologism), something must be done to differentiate the gradations, and to express the subordinations of life; because each term in the descending series, being first of all a mode of non-reality to the spectator, is next to assume the functions of a real life in its relations to the next lower or interior term of the series.

What the painter does in order to produce this peculiar modification of appearances, so that an object shall affect us first of all as an idealized or unreal thing, and next as itself a sort of relation to some secondary object still more intensely unreal, we shall not attempt to describe; for in some technical points we should, perhaps, fail to satisfy the reader, and without technical explanations we could not satisfy the question. But, as to the poet, all the depths of philosophy,—at least of any known and recognised philosophy,—would less avail to explain speculatively the principles which in such a case should guide him than Shakspere has explained by his practice. The problem before him was one of his own suggesting; the difficulty was of his own making. It

was so to differentiate a drama that it might stand within a drama precisely as a painter places a picture within a picture, and therefore that the secondary or inner drama should be non-realized upon a scale that would throw, by comparison, a reflex colouring of reality upon the principal drama. This was the problem, this was the thing to be accomplished; and the secret, the law, of the process by which he accomplishes this is to swell, tumefy, stiffen, not the diction only, but the tenor of the thought,—in fact, to stilt it, and to give it a prominence and an ambition beyond the scale which he adopted for his ordinary life. It is, of course, therefore, in rhyme—an artifice which Shakspere employs with great effect on other similar occasions (that is, occasions when he wished to solemnize or in any way differentiate the life); it is condensed and massed as respects the flowing of the thoughts; it is rough and horrent with figures in strong relief, like the embossed gold of an ancient vase; and the movement of the scene is contracted into short gyrations —so unlike the free sweep and expansion of his general developments.

Now, the Grecian Tragedy stands in the very same circumstances, and rises from the same original basis. If, therefore, the reader can obtain a glimpse of the life within a life which the painter sometimes exhibits to the eye, and which the Hamlet of Shakspere exhibits to the mind—then he may apprehend the original phasis under which we contemplate the Greek Tragedy.

II. But to press further into the centre of things. Perhaps the very first element in the situation of the Grecian Tragedy, which operated by degrees to evoke all the rest, was the original elevation of the scale by which all was to be measured, in consequence of two accidents: 1st, the sanctity of the ceremonies in which Tragedy arose; 2d, the vast size of the ancient theatres.

The first point we need not dwell on. Everybody is aware that Tragedy in Greece grew by gradual expansions out of an idolatrous rite—out of sacrificial pomp: though we do not find anybody who has noticed the consequent overruling effect which this had upon the quality of that Tragedy,—how, in fact, from this early cradle of Tragedy

arose a sanctity which compelled all things to modulate into the same religious key. But next, the theatres—why were they so vast in ancient cities: in Athens, in Syracuse, in Capua, in Rome? Purely from democratic influences. Every citizen was entitled to a place at the public scenical representations. In Athens, for example, the state paid for him. He was present, by possibility and by legal fiction, at every performance: therefore room must be prepared for him. And, allowing for the privileged foreigners (the domiciled aliens called μετοικοι), we are not surprised to hear that the Athenian theatre was adapted to an audience of thirty thousand persons. It is not enough to say that *naturally*—we have a right to say that *inevitably*—out of this prodigious compass, exactly ten times over the compass of the *large* Drury Lane burned down a generation ago,[1] arose certain immediate results that moulded the Greek Tragedy in all its functions, purposes, and phenomena. The person must be aggrandized, the countenance must be idealized. For upon any stage corresponding in its scale to the colossal dimensions of such a house the unassisted human figure would have been lost; the unexaggerated human features would have been seen as in a remote perspective, and, besides, have had their expression lost; the unreverberated human voice would have been undistinguishable from the surrounding murmurs of the audience. Hence the cothurnus to raise the actor; hence the voluminous robes to hide the disproportion thus resulting to the figure; hence the mask larger than life, painted to represent the noble Grecian contour of countenance; hence the mechanism by which it was made to swell the intonations of the voice like the brazen tubes of an organ.

Here, then, you have a Tragedy, by its very origin, in mere virtue of the accidents out of which it arose, standing upon the inspiration of religious feeling; pointing, like the spires of our English parish churches, up to heaven by mere necessity of its earliest purpose, from which it could not alter or swerve *per saltum*; so that an influence once there was always there. Even from that cause, therefore, you have a Tragedy ultra-human and Titanic. But, next, from

[1] Drury Lane Theatre was burnt down on Friday, 24th February 1809.—M.

political causes falling in with that early religious cause, you have a Tragedy forced into a more absolute and unalterable departure from a human standard. That figure so noble, that voice so profound, and, by the very construction of the theatres as well as of the masks, receiving such solemn reverberations, proclaim a being elevated above the ordinary human scale. And then comes the countenance always adjusted to the same unvarying tone of sentiment, viz. the presiding sentiment of the situation, which of itself would go far to recover the key-note of Greek Tragedy. These things being given, we begin to perceive a life removed by a great gulf from the ordinary human life even of kings and heroes: we descry a life within a life.

III. Here, therefore, is the first great landing-place, the first station, from which we can contemplate the Greek Tragedy with advantage. It is, by comparison with the life of Shakspere, what the inner life of the mimetic play in Hamlet is to the outer life of the Hamlet itself. It is a life below a life. That is—it is a life treated upon a scale so sensibly different from the proper life of the spectator as to impress him profoundly with the feeling of its idealization. Shakspere's tragic life is our own life exalted and selected: the Greek tragic life presupposed another life, the spectator's, thrown into relief before it. The tragedy was projected upon the eye from a vast profundity in the rear; and between this life and the spectator, however near its phantasmagoria might advance to him, was still an immeasurable gulf of shadows.

Hence, coming nearer still to the determinate nature and circumscription of the Greek Tragedy, it was *not* in any sense a development—1, of human character, or, 2, of human passion. Either of these objects, attributed to tragedy, at once inoculates it with a life essentially on the common human standard. But that neither was so much as dreamed of in the Grecian Tragedy is evident from the mere mechanism and ordinary conduct of those dramas which survive,—those especially which seem entitled to be viewed as fair models of the common standard. About 1000 to 1500 lines, of which one-fifth must be deducted for the business of the chorus, may be taken as an average extent of a Greek tragic

drama. Five acts, of one hundred and sixty lines each, allow no sweep at all for the systole and diastole, the contraction and expansion, the knot and the *dénouement*, of a tragic interest, according to our modern meaning. The ebb and flow, the inspiration and expiration, cannot find room to play in such a narrow scene. Were the interest made to turn at all upon the evolution of character, or of passion modified by character, and both growing upon the reader through various aspects of dialogue, of soliloquy, and of multiplied action—it would seem a storm in a wash-hand basin. A passion which advanced and precipitated itself through such rapid harlequin changes would at best impress us with the feeling proper to a hasty melodrama, or perhaps serious pantomime. It would read like the imperfect outline of a play, or, still worse, would seem framed to move through such changes as might raise an excuse for the dancing and the lyric music. But the very external phenomena, the apparatus and scenic decorations, of the Greek Tragedy all point to other functions. Shakspere—that is, English Tragedy—postulates the intense life of flesh and blood, of animal sensibility, of man and woman — breathing, waking, stirring, palpitating with the pulses of hope and fear. In Greek Tragedy, the very masks show the utter impossibility of these tempests or conflicts. Struggle there is none, internal or external: not like Hamlet's with his own constitutional inertia and his gloomy irresolution of conscience; not like Macbeth's with his better feeling as a man, with his hospitality as a host. Medea, the most tragic figure in the Greek scene, passes through no flux and reflux of passion, through no convulsions of jealousy on the one hand, or maternal love on the other. She is tossed to and fro by no hurricanes of wrath, wrenched by no pangs of anticipation. All this is supposed to have passed out of the spectator's presence. The dire conflict no more exhibits itself scenically and "*coram populo*" than the murder of her two innocent children. Were it possible that it should, how could the *mask* be justified? The apparatus of the stage would lose all decorum, and Grecian taste, or sense of the appropriate, which much outran the strength of Grecian creative power, would have been exposed to perpetual shocks.

IV. The truth is now becoming palpable: certain great *situations*—not passion in states of growth, of movement, of self-conflict—but fixed, unmoving *situations*, were selected; these held on through the entire course of one or more acts. A lyric movement of the chorus, which closed the act, and gave notice that it was closed, sometimes changed this situation; but throughout the act it continued unchanged, like a statuesque attitude. The story of the tragedy was pretty nearly involved and told by implication in the *tableaux vivants* which presided through the several acts. The very slight dialogue which goes on seems meant rather as an additional exposition of the interest—a commentary on the attitude originally assumed — than as any exhibition of passions growing and kindling under the eye of the spectator. The mask, with its monotonous expression, is not out of harmony with the scene; for the passion is essentially fixed throughout, not mantling and undulating with the breath of change, but frozen into marble life.

And all this is both explicable in itself, and peremptorily determined, by the sort of idealized life—life in a state of remotion, unrealized, and translated into a neutral world of high cloudy antiquity—which the Tragedy of Athens demanded for its atmosphere.

Had the Greeks, in fact, framed to themselves the idea of a tumultuous passion — passion expressing itself by the agitations of fluctuating will—as any fit, or even possible, subject for scenic treatment, in that case they must have resorted to real life, the more real the better. Or, again, had real life offered to their conceptions a just field for scenic exhibition, in that case they must have been thrown upon conflicts of tempestuous passion, the more tempestuous the better. But, being, by the early religious character of Tragedy, and by the colossal proportions of their theatres, imperiously driven to a life more awful and still—upon life as it existed in elder days, amongst men so far removed that they had become invested with a patriarchal, or even an antediluvian, mistiness of antiquity, and often into the rank of demigods—they felt it possible to present this mode of being in states of *suffering*, for suffering is enduring and indefinite, but never in states of *conflict*, for conflict is by its

nature fugitive and evanescent. The Tragedy of Greece is always held up as a thing long past — the Tragedy of England as a thing now passing. We are invited by Sophocles or Euripides, as by some great necromancer, to see long-buried forms standing in solemn groups upon the stage —phantoms from Thebes or from Cyclopian cities. But Shakspere is a Cornelius Agrippa, who shows us, in his magic glass, creatures yet breathing, and actually mixing in the great game of life upon some distant field, inaccessible to us without a magician's aid.

The Greek drama, therefore, by its very necessities proposing to itself only a few grand attitudes or situations, and brief dialogues as the means of illuminating those situations, with scarcely anything of action "actually occurring on the stage," from these purposes derives its other peculiarities: in the elementary necessities lay the *fundus* of the rest.

V. The notion, for example, that murder, or violent death, was banished from the Greek stage on the Parisian conceit of the shock which such bloody incidents would give to the taste is perfectly erroneous. Not because it was sanguinary, but because it was action, had the Greeks an objection to such violences. No action of *any kind* proceeds legitimately on that stage. The persons of the drama are always in a reposing state, "so long as they are before the audience." And the very meaning of an *act* is that in the intervals, the suspension of the acts, any possible time may elapse and any possible action may go on.

VI. Hence, also, a most erroneous theory has arisen about Fate as brooding over the Greek tragic scene. This was a favourite notion of the two Schlegels. But it is evident that many Greek tragedies, both amongst those which survive, and amongst those the titles and subjects of which are recorded, did not, and could not, present any opening at all for this dark agency. Consequently it was not essential. And, even where it did intervene, the Schlegels seem to have misunderstood its purpose. A prophetic colouring, a colouring of ancient destiny, connected with a character or an event, has the effect of exalting and ennobling. But whatever tends towards this result inevitably translates the persons and their situation from that condition of ordinary

breathing life which it was the constant effort of the Greek Tragedy to escape; and therefore it was that the Greek poet preferred the gloomy idea of Fate,—not because it was essential, but because it was elevating. It is for this reason, and apparently for this reason only, that Cassandra is connected by Æschylus with Agamemnon. The Sphinx, indeed, was connected with the horrid tale of Œdipus in *every* version of the tale; but Cassandra was brought upon the stage out of no *certain* historic tradition, or proper relation to Agamemnon, but to confer the solemn and mysterious hoar of a dark prophetic woe upon the dreadful catastrophe. Fate was therefore used, not for its own direct moral value as a force upon the will, but for its derivative power of ennobling and darkening.

VII. Hence, too, that habit amongst the tragic poets of travelling back to regions of forgotten fable and dark legendary mythus. Antiquity availed powerfully for their purposes, because of necessity it abstracted all petty details of individuality and local notoriety,—all that would have composed a *character*. It acted as twilight acts (which removes day's "mutable distinctions"), and reduced the historic person to that sublime state of monotonous gloom which suited the views of a poet who wanted only the *situation*, but would have repelled a poet who sought also for the complex features of a character. It is true that such remote and fabulous periods are visited at times, though not haunted, by the modern dramatist. Events are sought, even upon the French stage, from Gothic or from Moorish times. But in that case the poet endeavours to improve and strengthen any traits of character that tradition may have preserved, or by a direct effort of power to create them altogether where history presents a blank neutrality — whereas the Greek poet used simply that faint outline of character, in its gross distinctions of good and bad, which the situation itself implied. For example, the Creon of Thebes is pretty uniformly exhibited as tyrannical and cruel. But that was the mere result of his position as a rival originally for the throne, and still more as the executive minister of the popular vengeance against Polynices for having brought a tide of war against his mother-land: in

that representative character Creon is compelled to acts of cruelty against Antigone in her sublime exercise of natural piety, both sisterly and filial; and this cruelty to her and to the miserable wreck, her father, making the very wrath of heaven an argument for further persecution, terminates in leaving him an object of hatred to the spectator. But, after all, his conduct seems to have been purely official and ministerial. Nor, if the reader think otherwise, will he find any further emanation from Creon's individual will or heart than the mere blank expression of tyranny in a public cause,—nothing, in short, of that complexity and interweaving of qualities, that interaction of moral and intellectual powers, which we moderns understand by a character. In short, all the rude outlines of character on the Greek stage were, in the first place, mere inheritances from tradition, and generally mere determinations from the situation; and in no instance did the qualities of a man's will, heart, or constitutional temperament, manifest themselves by and through a collision or strife amongst each other,—which is our test of a dramatic character. And therefore it was that elder, or even fabulous, ages were used as the true natural field of the tragic poet: partly because antiquity ennobled; partly also because, by abstracting the individualities of a character, it left the historic figure in that neutral state which was most entirely passive to the moulding and determining power of the situation.

Two objections we foresee—1. That even Æschylus, the sublimest of the Greek tragedians, did *not* always go back to a high antiquity. He himself had fought in the Persian War; and yet he brings both Xerxes and his father Darius (by means of his apparition) upon the stage; though the very Marathon of the father was but ten years earlier than the Thermopylæ and Salamis of the son. But in this instance the scene is not properly Grecian: it is referred by the mind to Susa, the capital of Persia, far eastward even to Babylon, and four months' march from Hellas. Remoteness of space in that case countervailed the proximity in point of time; —though it may be doubted whether, without the benefit of the supernatural, it would even in that case have satisfied the Grecian taste. And it certainly would not had the

whole reference of the piece not been so intensely Athenian. For, when we talk of Grecian Tragedy, we must remember that, after all, the Pagan Tragedy was in any proper sense exclusively Athenian; and the tendency of the Grecian taste, in its general Grecian character, was in various instances modified or absolutely controlled by that special feature of its existence.

2. It will be urged, as indicating this craving after antiquity to be no peculiar or distinguishing feature of the Greek stage, that we moderns also turn away sometimes with dislike from a modern subject. Thus, if it had no other fault, the *Charles I.* of Banks is coldly received by English readers. Doubtless; but not because it is too modern.[1] The objection to it is that a parliamentary war is too intensely political, — and political, moreover, in a way which doubly defeated its otherwise tragic power: first, because questions too *notorious* and too domineering of law and civil polity were then at issue, —the very same which came to a final hearing and settlement in 1688-9. Our very form of government at this day is the result of the struggle then going on,—a fact which eclipses and dwarfs any separate or private interest of an individual prince, though otherwise and by his personal character, in the very highest degree, an object of tragic sympathy. Secondly, because the political interest afloat at that era (1649) was too complex and intricate: it wanted the simplicity of a poetic interest. That is the objection to *Charles I.* as a tragedy,—not because modern, but because too domineeringly political,—and because the casuistic features of the situation were too many and too intricate.

VIII. Thus far, therefore, we now comprehend the purposes and true *locus* to the human imagination of the Grecian Tragedy: that it was a most imposing scenic exhibition of a few grand situations,—grand from their very simplicity and from the consequences which awaited their *dénouement*, and seeking support to this grandeur from constantly fixing its eye upon elder ages lost in shades of antiquity, or, if departing from that ideal now and then, doing so with a view to

[1] The reference seems to be to one or other of the tragedies of John Banks, a London dramatic author of the latter part of the seventeenth century, the earliest dated 1677 and the latest 1696.—M.

patriotic objects, and seeking an occasional dispensation from the rigour of art in the popular indulgence to whatever touched the glory of Athens. Let the reader take along with him two other circumstances, and he will then complete the idea of this stately Drama: first, the character of the *Dialogue*; secondly, the functions of the *Chorus*.

IX. From one hundred and fifty to one hundred and eighty lines of hexameter Iambic verse compose the dialogue of each act.[1] This space is sufficient for the purpose of unfolding the situation to the spectator, but as a means of unfolding a character would have been by much too limited. For such a purpose, again, as this last, numerous scenes, dialogues, or soliloquies, must have been requisite; whereas generally, upon the Greek stage, a single scene, one dialogue between two interlocutors, occupies the entire act. The object of this dialogue was, of course, to bring forward the prominent points of the situation, and to improve its interest as regarded—1, its grandeur, 2, its statuesque arrangement to the eye, or, 3, the burden of tragic consequences which it announced. With such purposes, so distinct from any which are pursued upon the modern stage, arose a corresponding

[1] The five acts which old tradition prescribed as binding upon the Greek tragic drama cannot always be marked off by the interruptions of the chorus. In the *Heracleidæ* of Euripides they can. But it is evident that these acts existed for the sake of the chorus, by way of allowing sufficient openings (both as to number and length) for the choral dances; and the necessity must have grown out of the time allowed for a dramatic representation, and originally, therefore, out of the mere accidental convenience prescribed by the social usages of Athens. The rule, therefore, was at any rate an arbitrary rule. Purely conventional it would have been, and local, had it even grown out of any Attic superstition (as we have sometimes thought it might) as to the number of the choral dances. But most probably it rested upon a sort of convention which of all is the least entitled to respect or translation to foreign soils, viz. the mere local arrangement of meals and sleeping hours in Athens; which, having prescribed a limited space to the whole performance, afterwards left this space to be distributed between the recitation and the more popular parts addressed to eye and ear as the mob of Athens should insist. Horace, in saying roundly as a sort of *brutum fulmen*, "*Neu quinto brevior neu sit productior actu Fabula*," delivers this capricious rule in the capricious manner which becomes it. The *stet pro ratione voluntas* comes forward equally in the substance of the precept and in the style of its delivery.

distinction of the dialogue. Had the dialogue ministered to any purpose so *progressive* and so active as that of developing a character, with new incidents and changes of the speakers coming forward at every moment as occasions for evoking the peculiarities of that character—in such a case, the more it had resembled the movement, the fluctuations, the hurry of actual life and of real colloquial intercourse, the more it would have aided the views of the poet. But the purpose of the Greek dialogue was not progressive; essentially it was retrospective. For example, the *Heracleidæ* opens with as fine and impressive a group as ever sculptor chiselled—a group of young children, princely daughters of a great hero, whose acts resound through all mythology: viz. of Hercules, of a Grecian cleanser and deliverer from monsters, once irresistible to quell the oppressor, but now dead, and himself the subject of outrage in the persons of his children. These youthful ladies, helpless from their sex, with their grandmother Alcmene, now aged and infirm, have arranged themselves as a marble group on the steps ascending to the altars of a local deity. They have but one guide, one champion—a brother-in-arms of the deceased Hercules, and his reverential friend,—but this brave man also suffering, through years and martial toils, under the penalties of decaying strength. Such is the situation, such the inauguration of this solemn tragedy. The dialogue which follows between Iolaus, the faithful guardian of the ladies, and the local ruler of the land, takes up this inaugural picture, so pompous from blazing altars and cloudy incense, so religious from the known meaning of the conventional attitudes, so beautiful from the loveliness of the youthful suppliants rising tier above tier according to their ages and the graduation of the altar steps, so moving in its picture of human calamity by the contrasting figure of the two grey-haired supporters, so complete and orbicular in its delineation of human frailty by the surmounting circumstances of its crest, the altar, the priestess, the temple, the serene Grecian sky. This impressive picture, having of itself appealed to every one of thirty thousand hearts, having already challenged universal attention, is now explained and unfolded through the entire first act. Iolaus, the noble old warrior, who had clung the closer to the fluttering dovecot

of his buried friend from the unmerited persecution which had assaulted them, comments to the stranger prince upon the spectacle before him—a spectacle significant to Grecian eyes, intelligible at once to everybody, but still rare and witnessed in practice by nobody. The prince, Demophoon, is a ruler of Athens: the scene is placed in the Attic territory, but not in Athens,—about fifteen miles, in fact, from that city, and not far from the dread field of future Marathon. To the prince Iolaus explains the lost condition of his young flock. The ruler of Argos had driven them out of every asylum in the Peloponnesus. From city to city he had followed them at the heels with his cruel heralds of persecution. They were a party of unhappy fugitives (most of them proclaiming their innocence by their very age and helplessness) that had run the circle of Greek hospitality,—everywhere had been hunted out like wild beasts, or like those common nuisances from which their illustrious father had liberated the earth, till the long circuit of their unhappy wanderings had brought them at last to Athens, in which city they had a final confidence, as knowing not only the justice of that state, but that she only would not be moved from her purposes by fear of the aggressor. No finer opening can be imagined. The statuesque beauty of the group, and the unparalleled persecution which the first act exposes (a sort of misery and an absolute hostility of the human race to which our experience suggests no corresponding case, except that of a leper in the middle ages, or of a Pariah, or of a man under a papal interdict) fix the attention of the spectators beyond any other situation in Grecian Tragedy. And the compliment to Athens, not verbal but involved in the very situation, gave a depth of interest to this drama for the very tutelary region of the Drama which ought to stamp it with a sort of prerogative as in some respects the ideal tragedy or model of the Greek theatre.

Now, this one dialogue, as filling one act of a particular drama, is quite sufficient to explain the view we take of the Greek tragic dialogue. *It is altogether retrospective.* It takes for its theme the visible group arranged on the stage before the spectators from the first. Looking back to this, the two interlocutors (supposed to come forward upon the stage) con-

trive between them, one by pertinent questions, the other by judicious management of his replies, to bring out those circumstances in the past fortunes and immediate circumstances of this interesting family, which may put the audience in possession of all which it is important for them to know. The reader sees the dark legendary character which invests the whole tale; and in the following acts this darkness is made more emphatic from the fact that incidents are used of which contradictory versions existed,—some poets adopting one version, some another: so cloudy and uncertain were the facts. All this apocryphal gloom aids that sanctity and awe which belong to another and a higher mode of life,—to that slumbering life of sculpture, as opposed to painting, which we have called a life within a life. Grecian taste would inevitably require that the dialogue should be adjusted to this starting-point and standard. Accordingly, in the first place, the dialogue is always (and in a degree perhaps unperceived by the translators up to this time) severe, massy, simple, yet solemnized intentionally by the use of a select vocabulary, corresponding (in point of archaism and remoteness from ordinary use) to our own scriptural vocabulary! Secondly, the metre is of a kind not yet examined with suitable care. There were two objects aimed at in the Greek Iambic of the Tragic Drama; and in some measure these objects were in collision with each other, unless most artfully managed. One was to exhibit a purified imitation of real human conversation. The other was to impress upon this colloquial form, thus far by its very nature recalling ordinary human life, a character of solemnity and religious consecration. Partly this was effected by acts of omission and commission: by banishing certain words or forms of words; by recalling others of high antiquity (particular tenses, for instance, were never used by the tragic poets,—not even by Euripides, the most Wordsworthian[1] of the Athenian poets in the circumstance of having a peculiar theory of poetic

[1] Valckenaer [1715-1785], in his immortal series of comments on the *Phœnissæ* of Euripides, notices the peculiar spirit and tendency of the innovations introduced into the tragic diction by this youngest of the great Athenian dramatists. These innovations ran in the very same direction as those of Wordsworth in our own times. To say

diction, which lowered its tone of separation, and took it down from the cothurnus): other verbal forms, again, were used nowhere but upon the stage. Partly, therefore, this consecration of the tragic style was effected by the antique cast, and the exclusive cast, of its phraseology. But partly also it was effected by the metre. From whatever cause it may arise—chiefly, perhaps, from differences in the genius of the two languages—certain it is that the Latin Iambics of Seneca, &c. (in the tragedies ascribed to him), cannot be so read by an English mouth as to produce anything like the sonorous rhythmus and the grand intonation of the Greek Iambics. This is a curious fact, and as yet, we believe, unnoticed. But, over and above this original adaptation of the Greek language to the Iambic metre, we have no doubt whatever that the recitation of verse on the Attic stage was of an artificial and semi-musical character. It was undoubtedly much more *sustained*, and intonated with a slow and measured stateliness,[1] which, whilst harmonizing it with the other circumstances of solemnity in Greek Tragedy, would bring it nearer to music. Beyond a doubt, it had the effect (and

this, however, without further explanation, considering how profoundly the views of Wordsworth in this matter have been misunderstood, would simply be to mislead the English reader equally as to Euripides. Yet, as we should be sorry to discuss so great a theme indirectly and in a corner, it may be enough for the present to remark that Euripides did not mean to tax his great predecessors Æschylus and Sophocles with any error of taste in the cast of their diction. Having *their* purposes, they chose wisely. But he felt that the Athenian tragedy had two functions — 1, to impress awe and religious terror, 2, to impress pity. This last he adopted as his own peculiar function, and with it a corresponding diction—less grand (it is true) and stately, but counterbalancing this loss by a far greater power of pure (sometimes, we may say, of holy) household pathos. Such also was the change wrought by Wordsworth.

[1] Any man who has at all studied the Greek Iambics must well remember those forms of the metre which are used in a cadence at the close of a resounding passage, meant to express a full pause, and the prodigious difference from such as were meant for weaker lines, or less impressive metrical effects. These cadences, with their full body of rhythmus, are never reproduced in the Latin imitations of the Iambic hexameter: nor does it seem within the compass of Latin Iambic metre to reach such effects: though otherwise, and especially in the Dactylic hexameter, the Latin Language is more powerful than the Greek.

might have the effect even now, managed by a good reader) of the *recitative* in the Italian Opera: as, indeed, in other points, the Italian Opera is a much nearer representative of the Greek Tragedy than the direct Modern Tragedy professing that title.

X. As to the Chorus. Little needs to be said upon this element of the Athenian tragedy. Everybody knows how solemn, and therefore how solemnizing, must have been the richest and most lyrical music, the most passionate of the ancient poetry, the most dithyrambic of tragic and religious raptures, supported to the eye by the most hieroglyphic and therefore mysterious of dances. For the dances of the chorus —the strophe and the antistrophe — were symbolic, and therefore full of mysterious meanings; and not the less impressive because these meanings and these symbols had lost their significancy to the mob; since the very cause of that loss lay in the antiquity of their origin. One great error which remains to be removed is the notion that the chorus either did support, or was meant to support, the office of a moral teacher. The chorus simply stood on the level of a sympathizing spectator, detached from the business and the crash of the catastrophe; and its office was to guide or to interpret the sympathies of the audience. Here, perhaps, was a great error of Milton's, which will be found in two[1] separate places. At present, it is sufficient to say that the mysterious solemnity conferred by the chorus presupposes, and is in perfect harmony with, our theory of a life within a life: a life sequestrated into some far-off slumbering state, having the severe tranquillity of Hades; a life symbolized by the marble life of sculpture; but utterly out of all symmetry and proportion to the realities of that human life which we moderns take up as the basis of our Tragic Drama.

[1] Viz. in the brief Introduction to the *Samson Agonistes*, and in a remarkable passage (taxed not unreasonably with bigotry by Wordsworth) of the *Paradise Regained*. [The reference is to Milton's preface to his *Samson* entitled "Of that Sort of Dramatic Poem called Tragedy," and to *Par. Reg.*, iv, 338-352.—M.]

THE ANTIGONE OF SOPHOCLES

AS REPRESENTED ON THE EDINBURGH STAGE [1]

EVERYTHING in our days is new. *Roads*, for instance, which, being formerly "of the earth, earthy," and therefore perishable, are now iron, and next door to being immortal! *tragedies*, which are so entirely new that neither we nor our fathers, through eighteen hundred and ninety odd years, gone by since Cæsar did our little island the honour to sit upon its skirts, have ever seen the like to this "Antigone"! and, finally, even more new are *readers*, who, being once an obedient race of men, most humble and deferential in the presence of a Greek scholar, are now becoming intractably mutinous, keep their hats on whilst he is addressing them, and listen to him or not, as he seems to talk sense or nonsense! Some there are, however, who look upon all these new things as being intensely old. Yet, surely the railroads are new? No; not at all. Talus, the iron man in Spenser, who continually ran round the island of Crete, administering gentle warning and correction to offenders by flooring them with an iron flail, was a very ancient personage in

[1] Originally in *Tait's Magazine* for February and March 1846; reprinted in 1860 in the last and posthumous volume of De Quincey's edition of his Collected Writings. The occasion was the production on the Edinburgh stage in December 1845 of an English version of the Greek *Antigone*, the part of Antigone performed by Miss Helen Faucit (now Lady Martin), and the dresses and stage-arrangements made as much Greek as possible. De Quincey had been induced to break through his usual recluse evening habits and go to see the performance.—M.

Greek Fable ; and the received opinion is that he must have been a Cretan railroad, called The Great Circular Coast-Line, that carried my lords the judges on their circuits of jail-delivery. The "Antigone," again, that wears the freshness of morning dew, and is so fresh and dewy in the beautiful person of Miss Faucit, had really begun to look faded on the Athenian stage, and even "of a certain age," about the death of Pericles, whose meridian year was the year 444 before Christ. Lastly, these modern *readers*, that are so obstinately rebellious to the once Papal authority of Greek, they—No ; on consideration, they *are* new. Antiquity produced many monsters, but none like *them*.

The truth is that this vast multiplication of readers within the last twenty-five years has changed the prevailing character of readers. The minority has become the overwhelming majority : the quantity has disturbed the quality. Formerly, out of every five readers, at least four were, in some degree, classical scholars ; or, if *that* would be saying too much,—if two of the four had "small Latin and less Greek,"—they were generally connected with those who had more or, at the worst, who had much reverence for Latin, and more reverence for Greek. If they did not all share in the services of the temple, all at least shared in the superstition. But now-a-days the readers come chiefly from a class of busy people who care very little for ancestral crazes. Latin they have heard of, and some of them know it as a good sort of industrious language, that even in modern times has turned out many useful books, astronomical, medical, philosophical, and (as Mrs. Malaprop observes) diabolical ; but, as to Greek, they think of it as of an ancient mummy : you spend an infinity of time in unswathing it from its old dusty wrappers, and, when you have come to the end, what do you find for your pains ? A woman's face, or a baby's, that certainly is not the better for being 3000 years old ; and perhaps a few ears of wheat, stolen from Pharaoh's granary ; which wheat, when sown[1] in Norfolk or Mid-Lothian, reaped, threshed, ground, baked, and hunted through all sorts of tortures, yields a breakfast roll that (as a Scottish baker observed to

[1] "*When sown*" :—as it has been repeatedly ; a fact which some readers may not be aware of.

me) is "not just *that* bad." Certainly not: not exactly "*that* bad"; not worse than the worst of our own; but, still, much fitter for Pharaoh's breakfast-table than for ours.

I, for my own part, stand upon an isthmus, connecting me, at one terminus, with the rebels against Greek, and, at the other, with those against whom they are in rebellion. On the one hand, it seems shocking to me, who am steeped to the lips in antique prejudices, that Greek, in unlimited quantities, should not secure a limited privilege of talking nonsense. Is all reverence extinct for old and ivy-mantled and worm-eaten things? Surely, if your own grandmother lectures on morals,—which perhaps now and then she does,—she will command that reverence from you by means of her grandmotherhood which by means of her ethics she might *not*. To be a good Grecian is now to be a faded potentate,—a sort of phantom Mogul, sitting at Delhi, with an English sepoy bestriding his shoulders. Matched against the master of *ologies*, in our days the most accomplished of Grecians is becoming what the "master of sentences" had become long since in competition with the political economist. Yet, be assured, reader, that all the "ologies" hitherto christened,—oölogy, ichthyology, ornithology, conchology, palæodontology, &c.,—do not furnish such mines of labour as does the Greek language when thoroughly searched. The "Mithridates" of Adelung, improved by the commentaries of Vater and of subsequent authors, numbers up about 4000 languages and jargons on our polyglot earth [1]; not including the chuckling of poultry, nor caterwauling, nor barking, howling, braying, lowing, nor other respectable and ancient dialects, that perhaps have their elegant and their vulgar varieties, as well as prouder forms of communication. But my impression is that the Greek, taken by itself,—this one exquisite language, considered as a quarry of *intellectual* labour,—has more work in it, is more truly a *pièce de resistance*, than all the remaining 3999, with caterwauling thrown into the bargain. So far I side with the Grecian, and think that he ought to be honoured with a little genuflexion. Yet, on the other hand, the finest sound on this earth, and which rises like an orchestra, above all the uproars of earth and the Babels of

[1] See *ante*, p. 33.—M.

earthly languages, is truth—absolute truth ; and the hatefulest is conscious falsehood. Now, there *is* falsehood,—nay (which seems strange) even sycophancy,—in the old undistinguishing homage to all that is called classical. Yet why should men be sycophants in cases where they *must* be disinterested? Sycophancy grows out of fear, or out of mercenary self-interest. But what can there exist of either pointing to an old Greek poet? Cannot a man give his free opinion upon Homer without fearing to be waylaid by his ghost? But it is not *that* which startles him from publishing the secret demur which his heart prompts upon hearing false praises of a Greek poet, or praises which, if not false, are extravagant. What he fears is the scorn of his contemporaries. Let once a party have formed itself, considerable enough to protect a man from the charge of presumption in throwing off the yoke of *servile* allegiance to all that is called classical,—let it be a party ever so small numerically, and the rebels will soon be many. What a man fears is to affront the whole storm of indignation, real and affected, in his own solitary person. "Goth!" "Vandal!" he hears from every side. Break that storm by dividing it, and he will face its anger. "Let me be a Goth," he mutters to himself, "but let me not dishonour myself by affecting an enthusiasm which my heart rejects!"

Ever since the Restoration of Letters there has been a cabal, an academic interest, a factious league amongst universities, and learned bodies, and individual scholars, for exalting as something superterrestrial, and quite unapproachable by moderns, the monuments of Greek Literature. France in the time of Louis XIV, England in the latter part of that time,—in fact, each country as it grew polished at some cost of strength,—carried this craze to a dangerous excess,—dangerous as all things false are dangerous, and depressing to the aspirations of genius. Boileau, for instance, and Addison, though neither of them accomplished in scholarship,[1] nor either of them extensively read in *any* department of the classic literature, speak everywhere of the classics as

[1] Boileau, it is true, translated Longinus. But there goes little Greek to *that*. It is in dealing with Attic Greek, and Attic *poets*, that a man can manifest his Grecian skill.

having notoriously, and by the general confession of polished nations, carried the functions of poetry and eloquence to that sort of faultless beauty which probably does *really* exist in the Greek sculpture. There are few things perfect in this world of frailty. Even lightning is sometimes a failure; Niagara has horrible faults; and Mont Blanc might be improved by a century of chiselling from judicious artists. Such are the works of blind elements, which (poor things!) cannot improve by experience. As to man, who *does*, the Sculpture of the Greeks in their marbles and sometimes in their gems seems the only act of *his* workmanship which has hit the bull's eye in the target at which we are all aiming. Not so, with permission from Messrs. Boileau and Addison, the Greek Literature. The faults in this are often conspicuous; nor are they likely to be hidden for the coming century, as they have been for the three last. The idolatry will be shaken: as *idols*, some of the classic models are destined to totter; and I foresee, without gifts of prophecy, that many labourers will soon be in this field—many idoloclasts, who will expose the signs of disease which zealots had interpreted as power, and of weakness which is not the less real because scholars had fancied it health, nor the less injurious to the total effect because it was inevitable under the accidents of the Grecian position.

Meantime, I repeat that to disparage anything whatever, or to turn the eye upon blemishes, is no part of my present purpose. Nor could it be: since the one sole section of the Greek Literature as to which I profess myself an enthusiast happens to be the Tragic Drama, and here only I myself am liable to be challenged as an idolater. As regards the Antigone in particular, so profoundly do I feel the impassioned beauty of her situation in connexion with her character that long ago, in a work of my own (yet unpublished), having occasion (by way of overture introducing one of the sections) to cite before the reader's eye the chief pomps of the Grecian theatre, after invoking "the magnificent witch" Medea, I call up Antigone to this shadowy stage by the apostrophe, "Holy heathen, daughter of God before God was known,[1] flower from Paradise after Paradise was closed, that, quitting

[1] "*Before God was known*":—*i.e.* known in Greece.

all things for which flesh languishes, safety and honour, a palace and a home, didst make thyself a houseless pariah, lest the poor pariah king, thy outcast father, should want a hand to lead him in his darkness, or a voice to whisper comfort in his misery; angel, that badest depart for ever the glories of thy own bridal day, lest he that had shared thy nursery in childhood should want the honours of a funeral; idolatrous, yet Christian lady, that in the spirit of martyrdom trodst alone the yawning billows of the grave, flying from earthly hopes, lest everlasting despair should settle upon the grave of thy brother!" In fact, though all the groupings, and what I would call permanent attitudes, of the Grecian stage, are majestic, there is none that, to my mind, towers into such affecting grandeur as this final revelation, through Antigone herself, and through her own dreadful death, of the tremendous woe that destiny had suspended over her house. If, therefore, my business had been chiefly with the individual drama, I should have found little room for any sentiment but that of profound admiration. But my present business is different: it concerns the Greek Drama generally, and the attempt to revive it; and its object is to elucidate, rather than to praise or to blame. To explain this better, I will describe two things: 1*st*, the sort of audience that I suppose myself to be addressing, and, 2*dly*, as growing out of *that*, the particular quality of the explanations which I wish to make.

1*st*, As to the audience:—In order to excuse the tone (which occasionally I may be obliged to assume) of one speaking as from a station of knowledge to others having no knowledge, I beg it to be understood that I take that station deliberately, on no conceit of superiority to my readers, but as a companion adapting my services to the wants of those who need them. I am not addressing those already familiar with the Greek Drama, but those who frankly confess, and (according to their conjectural appreciation of it) who regret, their non-familiarity with that Drama. It is a thing well known to publishers, through remarkable results, and is now showing itself on a scale continually widening, that a new literary public has arisen, very different from any which existed at the beginning of

this century. The aristocracy of the land have always been, in a moderate degree, literary: less, however, in connexion with the *current* literature than with literature generally—past as well as present. And this is a tendency naturally favoured and strengthened in *them* by the fine collections of books, carried forward through successive generations, which are so often found as a sort of hereditary foundation in the country mansions of our nobility. But a class of readers prodigiously more extensive has formed itself within the commercial orders of our great cities and manufacturing districts. These orders range through a large scale. The highest classes amongst them were always literary. But the interest of literature has now swept downwards through a vast compass of descents: and this large body, though the busiest in the nation, yet, by having under their undisturbed command such leisure time as they have *at all* under their command, are eventually able to read more than those even who seem to have nothing else but leisure. In justice, however, to the nobility of our land, it should be remembered that their stations in society, and their wealth, their territorial duties, and their various public duties in London,—as at court, at public meetings, in Parliament, &c.,—bring crowded claims upon their time; whilst even sacrifices of time to the graceful courtesies of life are, in reference to *their* stations, a sort of secondary duties. These allowances made, it still remains true that the busier classes are the main reading classes; whilst, from their immense numbers, they are becoming effectually the body that will more and more impress upon the moving literature its main impulse and direction. One other feature of difference there is amongst this commercial class of readers. Amongst the aristocracy all are thoroughly educated, excepting those who go at an early age into the army; of the commercial body, none receive an elaborate, and what is meant by a liberal, education, except those standing by their connexions in the richest classes. Thus it happens that, amongst those who have not inherited but achieved their stations, many men of fine and powerful understandings, accomplished in manners, and admirably informed, not having had the benefits when young of a regular classical

education, find (upon any accident bringing up such subjects) a deficiency which they do not find on other subjects. They are too honourable to undervalue advantages which they feel to be considerable simply because they were denied to themselves. They regret their loss. And yet it seems hardly worth while, on a simple prospect of contingencies that may never be realized, to undertake an entirely new course of study for redressing this loss. But they would be glad to avail themselves of any useful information not exacting study. These are the persons, this is the class, to which I address my remarks on the "Antigone"; and out of *their* particular situation, suggesting upon all elevated subjects a corresponding tone of liberal curiosity, will arise the particular nature and direction of these remarks.

Accordingly, I presume, *secondly*, that this curiosity will take the following course:—These persons will naturally wish to know, at starting, what there is *differentially* interesting in a Grecian tragedy, as contrasted with one of Shakspere's or of Schiller's: in what respect, and by what agencies, a Greek tragedy affects us, or is meant to affect us, otherwise than as *they* do; and how far the Antigone of Sophocles was judiciously chosen as the particular medium for conveying to British minds a first impression, and a representative impression, of Greek Tragedy. So far, in relation to the ends proposed, and the means selected. *Finally*, these persons will be curious to know the issue of such an experiment. Let the purposes and the means have been bad or good, what was the actual success? And not merely success in the sense of the momentary acceptance by half a dozen audiences, whom the mere decencies of justice must have compelled to acknowledge the manager's trouble and expense on their behalf; but what was the degree of satisfaction felt by students of the Athenian[1] Tragedy in relation to their long-cherished ideal? Did the representation succeed in realizing, for a moment, the awful

[1] At times I say pointedly the *Athenian* rather than the *Grecian* tragedy, in order to keep the reader's attention awake to a remark made by Paterculus,—viz. that, although Greece coquettishly welcomed homage to herself as generally concerned in the Greek literature, in reality Athens only had any original share in the Drama, or in the Oratory of Greece. [See *ante*, p. 223.—M.]

pageant of the Athenian stage? Did Tragedy, in Milton's immortal expression,—

"Come sweeping by
In sceptred pall"?

Or was the whole, though successful in relation to the thing attempted, a failure in relation to what ought to have been attempted? Such are the questions to be answered.

The first elementary idea of a Greek tragedy is to be sought in a serious Italian opera. The Greek dialogue is represented by the recitative; and the tumultuous lyrical parts assigned chiefly, though not exclusively, to the chorus on the Greek stage, are represented by the impassioned airs, duos, trios, choruses, &c., on the Italian. And here, at the very outset, occurs a question which lies at the threshold of a Fine Art,—that is, of *any* Fine Art: for, had the views of Addison upon the Italian Opera had the least foundation in truth, there could have been no room or opening for any mode of imitation except such as belongs to a *mechanic* art.

The reason for at all connecting Addison with this case is that *he* chiefly was the person occupied in assailing the Italian Opera; and this hostility arose, probably, in his want of sensibility to good (that is, to Italian) music. But, whatever might be his motive for the hostility, the single argument by which he supported it was this,—that a hero ought not to sing upon the stage, because no hero known to history ever summoned a garrison in a song, or charged a battery in a semichorus. In this argument lies an ignorance of the very first principle concerned in *every* Fine Art. In all alike, more or less directly, the object is to reproduce in the mind some great effect through the agency of *idem in alio*. The *idem*, the same impression, is to be restored, but *in alio*, in a different material,—by means of some different instrument. For instance, on the Roman stage there was an art, now entirely lost, of narrating, and in part of dramatically representing, an impassioned tale by means of dancing, of musical accompaniment in the orchestra, and of elaborate pantomime in the performer. *Saltavit Hypermnestram*,—he

danced (that is, he represented by dancing and pantomime the story of) Hypermnestra. Now, suppose a man to object that young ladies, when saving their youthful husbands at midnight from assassination, could not be capable of waltzing or quadrilling, how wide is this of the whole problem! This is still seeking for the *mechanic* imitation, some imitation founded in the very fact: whereas the object is to seek the imitation in the sameness of the impression drawn from a different, or even from an impossible, fact. If a man, taking a hint from the Roman "saltatio" (*saltavit Andromachen*), should say that he would "whistle Waterloo,"—that is, by whistling connected with pantomime, would express the passion and the charges of Waterloo,—it would be monstrous to refuse him his postulate on the pretence that "people did not whistle at Waterloo." Precisely so: neither are most people made of marble, but of a material as different as can well be imagined,—viz. of elastic flesh, with warm blood coursing along its tubes; and yet, for all that, a sculptor will draw tears from you by exhibiting, in pure statuary marble on a sepulchral monument, two young children with their little heads on a pillow, sleeping in each other's arms; whereas, if he had presented them in wax-work, which yet is far more like to flesh, you would have felt little more pathos in the scene than if they had been shown baked in gilt gingerbread. He has expressed the *idem*, the identical thing expressed in the real children,—the sleep that masks death, the rest, the peace, the purity, the innocence,—but *in alio*, in a substance the most different: rigid, non-elastic, and as unlike to flesh, if tried by touch, or eye, or by experience of life, as can well be imagined. So of the whistling. It is the very worst objection in the world to say that the strife of Waterloo did not reveal itself through whistling: undoubtedly it did not; but that is the very ground of the man's art. He will reproduce the fury and the movement as to the only point which concerns you, viz. the effect upon your own sympathies, through a language that seems without any relation to it: he will set before you what *was* at Waterloo through that which was *not* at Waterloo,—whereas any direct factual imitation, resting upon painted figures drest up in regimentals, and worked by

watchwork through the whole movements of the battle, would have been no art whatsoever in the sense of a Fine Art, but a base *mechanic* mimicry.

This principle of the *idem in alio*, so widely diffused through all the higher revelations of art, it is peculiarly requisite to bear in mind when looking at Grecian Tragedy, because no form of human composition employs it in so much complexity. How confounding it would have been to Addison if somebody had told him that, substantially, he had himself committed the offence (as he fancied it) which he charged so bitterly upon the Italian Opera, and that, if the Opera had gone farther upon that road than himself, the Greek Tragedy, which he presumed to be so prodigiously exalted beyond modern approaches, had gone farther even than the Opera. Addison himself, when writing a tragedy, made this violation (as he would have said) of nature,—made this concession (as *I* should say) to a higher nature,—that he compelled his characters to talk in metre. It is true this metre was the common iambic,—which (as Aristotle remarks) is the most natural and spontaneous of all metres, and for a sufficient reason, in all languages. Certainly; but Aristotle never meant to say that it was natural for a gentleman in a passion to talk threescore and ten iambics *consecutively*: a chance line might escape him once and away; as we know that Tacitus opened one of his works by a regular dactylic hexameter in full curl, without ever discovering it to his dying day (a fact which is clear from his never having corrected it); and, this being a very artificial metre, *a fortiori* Tacitus might have slipped into a simple iambic. But that was an accident, whilst Addison had deliberately and uniformly made his characters talk in verse. According to the common and false meaning (which was his own meaning) of the word Nature, he had as undeniably violated the principle of the *natural* by this metrical dialogue as the Italian Opera by musical dialogue. If it is hard and trying for men to sing their emotions, not less so it must be to deliver them in verse.

But, if this were shocking, how much more shocking would it have seemed to Addison had he been introduced to parts which really exist in the Grecian Drama? Even

Sophocles, who, of the three tragic poets surviving from the wrecks of the Athenian stage, is reputed the supreme *artist*,[1] if not the most impassioned poet,—with what horror he would have overwhelmed Addison, when read by the light of those principles which he had himself so scornfully applied to the Opera! In the very monsoon of his raving misery, from calamities as sudden as they were irredeemable, a king is introduced not only conversing, but conversing in metre; not only in metre, but in the most elaborate of choral metres; not only under the torture of these lyric difficulties, but also chanting; not only chanting, but also in all probability dancing. What do you think of *that*, Mr. Addison?

There is, in fact, a scale of graduated ascents in these artifices for unrealizing the effects of dramatic situations:—

1. We may see, even in novels and prose comedies, a keen attention paid to the inspiriting and *dressing* of the dialogue: it is meant to be life-like, but still it is a little raised, pointed, coloured, and idealized.

2. In comedy of a higher and more poetic cast we find the dialogue *metrical*.

3. In comedy or in tragedy alike which is meant to be still further removed from ordinary life we find the dialogue fettered not only by metre, but by *rhyme*. We need not go to Dryden and others of our own middle stage, or to the French stage, for this: even in Shakspere,—as for example,

[1] "*The supreme artist*":—It is chiefly by comparison with Euripides that Sophocles is usually crowned with the laurels of *art*. But there is some danger of doing wrong to the truth in too blindly adhering to these old rulings of critical courts. The judgments would sometimes be reversed if the pleadings were before us. There were blockheads in those days. Undoubtedly it is past denying that Euripides at times betrays marks of carelessness in the structure of his plots, as if writing too much in a hurry: the original cast of the fable is sometimes not happy, and the evolution or disentangling is too precipitate. It is easy to see that he would have remoulded them in a revised edition, or *diaskeue* (διασκευη). On the other hand, I remember nothing in the Greek Drama more worthy of a great artist than parts in his Phœnissæ. Neither is he the effeminately tender or merely pathetic poet that some people imagine. He was able to sweep *all* the chords of the impassioned spirit. But the whole of this subject is in arrear: it is, in fact, *res integra*, almost unbroken ground.

in parts of Romeo and Juliet (and for no capricious purpose), —we may see effects sought from the use of rhyme. There is another illustration of the idealizing effect to be obtained from a particular treatment of the dialogue, seen in the Hamlet of Shakspere. In that drama there arises a necessity for exhibiting a play within a play. This interior drama is to be further removed from the spectator than the principal drama ; it is a deep below a deep ; and, to produce that effect, the poet relies chiefly upon the stiffening of the dialogue, and removing it still farther than the general dialogue of the *including* or *outside* drama from the standard of ordinary life.

4. We may suppose, superadded to these artifices for idealizing the situations, even music of an intermitting character, sometimes less, sometimes more, impassioned— recitatives, airs, choruses. Here we have reached the Italian Opera.

5. And, *finally*, besides all these resources of art, we find dancing introduced, but dancing of a solemn, mystical, and symbolic character. Here, at last, we have reached the Greek Tragedy. Probably the best exemplification of a Grecian tragedy that ever *will* be given to a modern reader is found in the Samson Agonistes of Milton. Now, in the choral or lyric parts of this fine drama, Samson not only talks, 1*st*, metrically (as he does everywhere, and in the most level parts of the scenic business), but, 2*d*, in very intricate metres, and, 3*d*, occasionally in *rhymed* metres (though the rhymes are perhaps too sparingly and too capriciously scattered by Milton), and, 4*th*, *singing* or chanting these metres (for, as the chorus sang, it was impossible that *he* could be allowed to talk in his ordinary voice, else he would have put them out, and ruined the music) : finally, 5*th*, I am satisfied that Milton meant him to *dance*. The office of the *chorus* was imperfectly defined upon the Greek stage. They are generally understood to be the *moralizers* of the scene. But this is liable to exceptions. Some of them have been known to do very bad things on the stage, and to come within a trifle of felony : as to misprision of felony, if there *is* such a crime, a Greek chorus thinks nothing of it. But that is no business of mine. What I

was going to say is that, as the chorus sometimes intermingles too much in the action, so the actors sometimes intermingle in the business of the chorus. Now, when you are at Rome, you must do as they do at Rome. And that the actor, who mixed with the chorus, was compelled to sing, is a clear case, for *his* part in the choral ode is always in the nature of an echo, or answer, or like an *antiphony* in cathedral services. But nothing could be more absurd than that one of these antiphonies should be sung and another said. That he was also compelled to dance, I am satisfied. The chorus only *sometimes* moralized, but it *always* danced; and any actor, mingling with the chorus, must dance also. A little incident occurs to my remembrance from the Moscow Expedition of 1812, which may here be used as an illustration:—One day King Murat, flourishing his plumage as usual, made a gesture of invitation to some squadrons of cavalry that they should charge the enemy: upon which the cavalry advanced, but maliciously contrived to envelop the king of dandies before he had time to execute his ordinary manœuvre of riding off to the left and becoming a spectator of their prowess. The cavalry resolved that for this once his Majesty should ride down at their head to the *mêlée*, and taste what fighting was like; and he, finding that the thing must be, though horribly vexed, made a merit of his necessity, and afterwards pretended that he liked it very much. Sometimes, in the darkness, in default of other misanthropic visions, the wickedness of this cavalry, their *méchanceté*, causes me to laugh immoderately. Now, I conceive that any interloper into the Greek chorus must have danced when *they* danced, or he would have been swept away by their impetus: *nolens volens*, he must have rode along with the orchestral charge,—he must have rode on the crest of the choral billows,—or he would have been rode down by their impassioned sweep. Samson, and Œdipus, and others, must have danced if they sang; and they certainly *did* sing, by notoriously intermingling in the choral business.[1]

"But now," says the plain English reader, "what was the object of all these elaborate devices? And how came

[1] I see a possible screw loose at this point: if *you* see it, reader, have the goodness to hold your tongue.

it that the English Tragedy, which surely is as good as the Greek" (and at this point a devil of defiance whispers to him, like the quarrelsome servant of the Capulets or the Montagues, "say *better*")—"that the English Tragedy contented itself with fewer of these artful resources than the Athenian?" I reply that the object of all these things was —to unrealize the scene. The English Drama, by its metrical dress, and by other arts more disguised, unrealized itself, liberated itself from the oppression of life in its ordinary standards, up to a certain height. Why it did not rise still higher, and why the Grecian *did*, I will endeavour to explain. It was not that the English Tragedy was less impassioned; on the contrary, it was far more so,—the Greek being awful rather than impassioned; but the passion of each is in a different key. It is not again that the Greek Drama sought a lower object than the English: it sought a different object. It is not imparity, but disparity, that divides the two magnificent theatres.

Suffer me, reader, at this point, to borrow from myself; and do not betray me to the authorities that rule in this journal if you happen to know (which is not likely) that I am taking an idea from a paper which years ago I wrote for an eminent literary journal. As I have no copy of that paper before me, it is impossible that I should save myself any labour of writing. The words, at any rate, I must invent afresh: and, as to the idea, you never *can* be such a churlish man as, by insisting on a new one, in effect to insist upon my writing a false one. In the following paragraph, therefore, I give the substance of a thought suggested by myself some years ago.[1]

That kind of feeling which broods over the Grecian Tragedy, and to court which feeling the tragic poets of Greece naturally spread all their canvas, was more nearly allied to the atmosphere of death than that of life. This expresses rudely the character of awe and religious horror investing the Greek theatre. But to my own feeling the different principle of passion which governs the Grecian

[1] The paper referred to is the immediately preceding paper in this volume, *Theory of Greek Tragedy*, which had appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* for February 1840.

conception of tragedy, as compared with the English, is best conveyed by saying that the Grecian is a breathing from the world of painting. What we read in sculpture is not absolutely death, but still less is it the fulness of life. We read there the abstraction of a life that reposes, the sublimity of a life that aspires, the solemnity of a life that is thrown to an infinite distance. This last is the feature of sculpture which seems most characteristic; the form which presides in the most commanding groups "is not dead but sleepeth": true, but it is the sleep of a life sequestrated, solemn, liberated from the bonds of space and time, and (as to both alike) thrown (I repeat the words) to a distance which is infinite. It affects us profoundly, but not by agitation. Now, on the other hand, the breathing life—life kindling, trembling, palpitating — that life which speaks to us in painting, this is also the life that speaks to us in English Tragedy. Into an English tragedy even festivals of joy may enter,—marriages and baptisms, or commemorations of national trophies; which, or anything *like* which, is incompatible with the very being of the Greek. In that Tragedy what uniformity of gloom; in the English what light alternating with depths of darkness! The Greek, how mournful; the English, how tumultuous! Even the catastrophes how different! In the Greek we see a breathless waiting for a doom that cannot be evaded,—a waiting, as it were, for the last shock of an earthquake, or the inexorable rising of a deluge; in the English it is like a midnight of shipwreck, from which up to the last, and till the final ruin comes, there still survives the sort of hope that clings to human energies.

Connected with this original awfulness of the Greek Tragedy, and possibly in part its cause, or at least lending strength to its cause, we may next remark the grand dimensions of the ancient theatres. Every citizen had a right to accommodation. *There* at once was a pledge of grandeur. Out of this original standard grew the magnificence of many a future amphitheatre, circus, hippodrome. Had the original theatre been merely a speculation of private interest, then, exactly as demand arose, a corresponding supply would have provided for it through its ordinary vulgar channels; and this supply would have taken place through rival theatres.

But the crushing exaction of "room for *every* citizen" put an end to that process of subdivision. Drury Lane, as I read, (or think that I read) thirty years ago, allowed sitting room for three thousand eight hundred people. Multiply *that* by ten, imagine thirty-eight thousand instead of thirty-eight hundred; and then you have an idea of the Athenian theatre.[1]

Next, out of that grandeur in the architectural proportions arose, as by necessity, other grandeurs. You are aware of the *cothurnus*, or buskin, which raised the actor's heel by two and a half inches; and you think that this must have caused a deformity in the general figure as incommensurate to this height. Not at all. The flowing dress of Greece healed all *that*.

But, besides the *cothurnus*, you have heard of the mask. So far as it was fitted to swell the intonations of the voice, you are of opinion that this mask would be a happy contrivance; for what, you say, could a common human voice avail against the vast radiation from the actor's centre of more than three myriads? If, indeed (like the Homeric Stentor), an actor spoke in point of loudness ὅσον ἄλλοι πεντηκοντα, as much as other fifty, then he might become audible to the assembled Athenians without aid. But, this being impossible, art must be invoked; and well if the mask, together with contrivances of another class, could correct it. Yet, if it could, still you think that this mask would bring along with it an overbalancing evil. For the expression, the fluctuating expression, of the features, the play of the muscles, the music of the eye and of the lips—aids to acting that, in our times, have given immortality to

[1] *Athenian Theatre*": — Many corrections remain to be made. Athens, in her bloom, was about as big as Calcutta, which contained, forty years ago, more than half a million of people; or as Naples, which (being long rated at three hundred thousand) is now known to contain at least two hundred thousand more. The well-known census of Demetrius Phalereus gave twenty-one thousand citizens. Multiply this by 5, or $4\frac{3}{4}$, and you have their families. Add ten thousand, multiplied by $4\frac{1}{2}$, for the *Metoikoi*. Then add four hundred thousand for the slaves: total, about five hundred and fifty thousand. But upon the fluctuations of the Athenian population there is much room for speculation. And, *quære*, was not the population of Athens greater two centuries before Demetrius, in the days of Pericles?

scores—whither would those have vanished? Reader, it mortifies me that all which I said to you upon the peculiar and separate grandeur investing the Greek theatre is forgotten. For you must consider that, where a theatre is built for receiving upwards of thirty thousand spectators, the curve described by what in modern times you would call the tiers of boxes must be so vast as to make the ordinary scale of human features almost ridiculous by disproportion. Seat yourself this day in the amphitheatre at Verona, and judge for yourself. In an amphitheatre, the stage, or properly the arena,—occupying, in fact, the place of our modern pit,—was much nearer than in a scenic theatre to the surrounding spectators. Allow for this; and, placing some adult in a station expressing the distance of the Athenian stage, then judge by his appearance if the delicate pencilling of Grecian features could have told of the Grecian distance. But, even if it could, then I say that this circumstantiality would have been hostile to the general tendencies (as already indicated) of the Grecian Drama. The sweeping movement of the Attic Tragedy *ought* not to admit of interruption from *distinct* human features; the expression of an eye, the loveliness of a smile, *ought* to be lost amongst effects so colossal. The mask aggrandized the features: even so far it acted favourably. Then figure to yourself this mask presenting an idealized face of the noblest Grecian outline, moulded by some skilful artist *Phidiaca manu*, so as to have the effect of a marble bust: this accorded with the aspiring *cothurnus*; and the motionless character impressed upon the features, the marble tranquillity, would (I contend) suit the solemn professional character of Athenian Tragedy far better than the most expressive and flexible countenance on its natural scale. "Yes," you say, on considering the character of the Greek Drama, "generally it might; in forty-nine cases suppose out of fifty: but what shall be done in the fiftieth, where some dreadful discovery or *anagnorisis* (*i.e.* recognition of identity) takes place within the compass of a single line or two; as, for instance, in the Œdipus Tyrannus, at the moment when Œdipus, by a final question of his own, extorts his first fatal discovery, viz. that he had been himself unconsciously the murderer of

Laius?" True: he has no reason as yet to suspect that Laius was his own father,—which discovery, when made further on, will draw with it another still more dreadful, viz. that by this parricide he had opened his road to a throne, and to a marriage with his father's widow, who was also his own natural mother. He does not yet know the worst: and to have killed an arrogant prince would not in those days have seemed a very deep offence. But then he believes that the pestilence had been sent as a secret vengeance for this assassination, which is thus invested with a mysterious character of horror. Just at this point Jocasta, his mother and his wife, says,[1] on witnessing the sudden revulsion of feeling in his face, "I shudder, O king, when looking on thy countenance." Now, in what way could this passing spasm of horror be reconciled with the unchanging expression in the marble-looking mask? This, and similar cases to this, must surely be felt to argue a defect in the scenic apparatus. But I say No: *first*, Because the general indistinctness from distance is a benefit that applies equally to the fugitive changes of the features and to their permanent expression,—you need not regret the loss through *absence* of an experience that would equally, though present, have been lost through *distance*. *Secondly*, The Greek actor had always the resource, under such difficulties, of averting his face,—a resource sanctioned in similar cases by the greatest of the Greek painters. *Thirdly*, The voluminous draperies of the scenic dresses, and generally of the Greek costume, made it an easy thing to muffle the features altogether by a gesture most natural to sudden horror. *Fourthly*, We must consider that there were no stage lights, but, on the contrary, that the general light of day was specially mitigated for that particular part of the theatre,—just as various architectural devices were employed to swell the volume of sound. *Finally*, I repeat my sincere opinion that the general indistinctness of the expression was, on principles of taste, an advantage, as harmonizing with the stately and sullen monotony of the Greek Tragedy. Grandeur in the attitudes, in the gestures,

[1] Having no Sophocles at hand, I quote from memory, not pretending therefore to exactness: but the sense is what I state.

in the groups, in the processions—all this was indispensable; but, on so vast a scale as the mighty cartoons of the Greek stage, an Attic artist as little regarded the details of physiognomy as a great architect would regard, on the frontispiece of a temple, the miniature enrichments that might be suitable in a drawing-room.

With these views upon the Grecian Theatre, and other views that it might oppress the reader to dwell upon in this place, suddenly in December last[1] an opportunity dawned—a golden opportunity, gleaming for a moment amongst thick clouds of impossibility that had gathered through three-and-twenty centuries—for seeing a Grecian tragedy presented on a British stage, and with the nearest approach possible to the beauty of those Athenian pomps which Sophocles, which Phidias, which Pericles, created, beautified, promoted. I protest, when seeing the Edinburgh theatre's *programme*, that a note dated from the Vatican would not have startled me more, though sealed with the seal of the fisherman, and requesting the favour of my company to take coffee with the Pope. Nay, less: for channels there were through which I might have compassed a presentation to his Holiness; but the daughter of Œdipus, the holy Antigone, could I have hoped to see *her* "in the flesh"? This tragedy, in an English version,[2] and with German music, had first been placed before the eyes and ears of our countrymen at Covent Garden during the winter of 1844-45. It was said to have succeeded. And soon after a report sprang up, from nobody knew where, that Mr. Murray meant to reproduce it in Edinburgh.[3]

[1] December 1845.—M.

[2] *Whose* version, I do not know. But one unaccountable error was forced on one's notice. *Thebes*, which by Milton and by every scholar is made a monosyllable, is here made a dissyllable. But *Thebæ*, the dissyllable, is a *Syrian* city. It is true that Casaubon deduces from a Syriac word, meaning a case or enclosure (a *theca*), the name of Thebes, whether Bœotian or Egyptian. It is probable, therefore, that Thebes the hundred-gated of Upper Egypt, Thebes the seven-gated of Greece, and Thebes of Syria, had all one origin as regards the name. But this matters not; it is the *English* name that we are concerned with,—which is, was, ever will be, and ought to be, *Thebes*.

[3] William Murray (1791-1852), manager of the Theatre Royal,

What more natural? Connected so nearly with the noblest house of scenic artists that ever shook the hearts of nations, nobler than ever raised undying echoes amidst the mighty walls of Athens, of Rome, of Paris, of London[1]—himself a man of talents almost unparalleled for versatility—why should not Mr. Murray, always so liberal in an age so ungrateful to *his* profession, have sacrificed something to this occasion? He, that sacrifices so much, why not sacrifice to the grandeur of the Antique? I was then in Edinburgh, or in its neighbourhood; and one morning, at a casual assembly of some literary friends,—present Professor Wilson, Messrs. J. F., C. N., L. C., and others, advocates, scholars, lovers of classical literature,[2]—we proposed two resolutions, of which the first was that the news was too good to be true. That passed *nem. con.*; and the second resolution was *nearly* passing,—viz. that a judgment would certainly fall upon Mr. Murray, had a second report proved true, viz. that not the Antigone, but a burlesque on the Antigone, was what he meditated to introduce. This turned out false[3]; the original report was suddenly revived eight or ten months after. Immediately on the heels of the promise the execution followed; and on the last (which I believe was the seventh) representation of the Antigone I prepared myself to attend.

It had been generally reported, as characteristic of myself, that in respect to all coaches, steamboats, railroads, wedding-parties, baptisms, and so forth, there was a fatal necessity of my being a trifle too late. Some malicious fairy, not invited to my own baptism, was supposed to have endowed me with this infirmity. It occurred to me that for once in my life I would show the scandalousness of such a belief by being a trifle too soon,—say, three minutes. And no name more lovely for inaugurating such a change, no memory with

Edinburgh, from the days of Sir Walter Scott's prime onwards for thirty years or so, and still remembered as a man of cultivated tastes, a fine actor, and a favourite in Edinburgh society.—M.

[1] The Kembles. Mr. Murray was of the family.—M.

[2] "J. F." must have been James Ferrier, better known as Professor Ferrier the metaphysician; "C. N." must have been Charles Neaves, afterwards Lord Neaves; about L. C. I am uncertain.—M.

[3] "*False*": or rather inaccurate. The burlesque was not on the Antigone, but on the Medea of Euripides, and very amusing.

which I could more willingly connect any reformation, than thine, dear, noble Antigone! Accordingly, because a certain man (whose name is down in my pocket-book for no good) had told me that the doors of the theatre opened at half-past six, whereas, in fact, they opened at seven, there was I, if you please, freezing in the little colonnade of the theatre precisely as it wanted six-and-a-half minutes to seven,—six-and-a-half minutes, observe, too soon. Upon which this son of absurdity coolly remarked that, if he had not set me half-an-hour forward, by my own showing I should have been twenty-three-and-a-half minutes too late. What sophistry! But thus it happened (namely, through the wickedness of this man) that, upon entering the theatre, I found myself, like Alexander Selkirk, in a frightful solitude, or like a single family of Arabs gathering at sunset about a solitary coffee-pot in the boundless desert. Was there an echo raised? it was from my own steps. Did anybody cough? it was too evidently myself. I was the audience; I was the public! And, if any accident happened to the theatre, such as being burned down, Mr. Murray would certainly lay the blame upon me! My business, meantime, as a critic, was—to find out the most malicious seat,—*i.e.* the seat from which all things would take the most unfavourable aspect. I could not suit myself in this respect: however bad a situation might seem, I still fancied some other as promising to be worse. And I was not sorry when an audience, by mustering in strength through all parts of the house, began to divide my responsibility as to burning down the building, and, at the same time, to limit the caprices of my distracted choice. At last, and precisely at half-past seven, the curtain drew up: a thing not strictly correct on a Grecian stage. But in theatres, as in other places, one must forget and forgive. Then the music began,—of which in a moment. The overture slipped out at one ear as it entered the other,—which, with submission to Mr. Mendelssohn, is a proof that it must be horribly bad; for, if ever there lived a man that in music can neither forget nor forgive, that man is myself. Whatever is very good never perishes from my remembrance,—that is, sounds in my ears by intervals for ever; and, for whatever is bad, I consign the author, in my wrath, to his

own conscience, and to the tortures of his own discords. The most villainous things, however, have one merit,—they are transitory as the best things; and *that* was true of the overture: it perished. Then, suddenly—O heavens! what a revelation of beauty!—forth stepped, walking in brightness, the most faultless of Grecian marbles, Miss Helen Faucit as Antigone. What perfection of Athenian sculpture! the noble figure, the lovely arms, the fluent drapery! What an unveiling of the ideal statuesque! Is it Hebe? is it Aurora? is it a goddess that moves before us? Perfect she is in form, perfect in attitude,—

> "Beautiful exceedingly
> Like a ladie from a far countrie."

Here was the redeeming jewel of the performance. It flattered one's patriotic feelings to see this noble young countrywoman realizing so exquisitely, and restoring to our imaginations, the noblest of Grecian girls. We critics, dispersed through the house, in the very teeth of duty and conscience, all at one moment unanimously fell in love with Miss Faucit. We felt in our remorse, and did not pretend to deny, that our duty was—to be savage. But when was the voice of duty listened to in the first uproars of passion? One thing I regretted,—viz. that, from the indistinctness of my sight for distant faces, I could not accurately discriminate Miss Faucit's features; but I was told by my next neighbour that they were as true to the antique as her figure. Miss Faucit's voice is fine and impassioned, being deep for a female voice; but in this organ lay also the only blemish of her personation. In her last scene, which is injudiciously managed by the Greek poet—too long by much, and perhaps misconceived in the modern way of understanding it—her voice grew too husky to execute the cadences of the intonations; yet, even in this scene, her fall to the ground, under the burden of her farewell anguish, was in a high degree sculpturesque through the whole succession of its stages.

Antigone, in the written drama, and still more in the personated drama, draws all thoughts so entirely to herself as to leave little leisure for examining the other parts; and, under such circumstances, the first impulse of a critic's mind

is that he ought to massacre all the rest indiscriminately,—it being clearly his duty to presume everything bad which he is not unwillingly forced to confess good, or concerning which he retains no distinct recollection. But I, after the first glory of Antigone's *avatar* had subsided, applied myself to consider the general "setting" of this Theban jewel. Creon, whom the Greek tragic poets take delight in describing as a villain, has very little more to do (until his own turn comes for grieving) than to tell Antigone, by minute-guns, that die she must. "Well, uncle, don't say that so often," is the answer which, secretly, the audience whispers to Antigone. Our uncle grows tedious; and one wishes at last that he himself could be "put up the spout." Mr. Glover,[1] from the sepulchral depth of his voice, gave effect to the odious Creontic menaces; and, in the final lamentations over the dead body of Hæmon, being a man of considerable intellectual power, Mr. Glover drew the part into a prominence which it is the fault of Sophocles to have authorized in that situation,—for the closing sympathies of the spectator ought not to be diverted, for a moment, from Antigone.

But the chorus, how did *they* play their part? Mainly *their* part must have always depended on the character of the music; even at Athens, that must have been very much the case, and at Edinburgh altogether, because dancing on the Edinburgh stage there was none. How came *that* about? For the very word "orchestral" suggests to a Greek ear *dancing* as the leading element in the choral functions. Was it because dancing with us is never used mystically and symbolically, never used in our religious services? Still it would have been possible to invent solemn and intricate dances, that might have appeared abundantly significant if expounded by impassioned music. But that music of Mendelssohn!—like it I cannot. Say not that Mendelssohn is a great composer. He *is* so. But here he was voluntarily abandoning the resources of his own genius, and the support of his divine art, in quest of a chimera,—that is, in quest of a thing called Greek music, which for *us* seems far more irrecoverable than the "Greek fire." I myself, from an early date, was a student of this subject. I read book after book

[1] One of the actors in Mr. Murray's Edinburgh company.—M.

upon it ; and each successive book sank me lower into darkness, until I had so vastly improved in ignorance that I could myself have written a quarto upon it which all the world should not have found it possible to understand. It should have taken three men to construe one sentence. I confess, however, to not having yet seen the writings upon this impracticable theme of Colonel Perronet Thompson. To write experimental music for choruses that are to support the else meagre outline of a Greek tragedy, will not do. Let experiments be tried upon worthless subjects ; and, if this of Mendelssohn's be Greek music, the sooner it takes itself off the better. Sophocles will be delivered from an incubus, and we from an affliction of the auditory nerves.

It strikes me that I see the source of this music. We that were learning German some thirty years ago must remember the noise made at that time about Mendelssohn, the Platonic philosopher. And why ? Was there anything particular in " Der Phædon " on the immortality of the soul ? Not at all ; it left us quite as mortal as it found us ; and it has long since been found mortal itself. Its venerable remains are still to be met with in many worm-eaten trunks, pasted on the lids of which I have myself perused a matter of thirty pages, except for a part that had been too closely perused by worms. But the key to all the popularity of the Platonic Mendelssohn is to be sought in the whimsical nature of German liberality,—which, in those days, forced Jews into paying toll at the gates of cities, under the title of " swine," but caressed their infidel philosophers. Now, in this category of Jew and infidel stood the author of " Phædon." He was certainly liable to toll as a hog ; but, on the other hand, he was much admired as one who despised the Pentateuch. Now, *that* Mendelssohn, whose learned labours lined our trunks, was the father of *this* Mendelssohn, whose Greek music afflicts our ears. Naturally, then, it strikes me that, as " papa " Mendelssohn attended the synagogue to save appearances, the filial Mendelssohn would also attend it. I likewise attended the synagogue now and then at Liverpool and elsewhere. We all three have been cruising in the same latitudes ; and, trusting to my own remembrances, I should pronounce that Mendelssohn has stolen his Greek music from

the synagogue. There was, in the first chorus of the "Antigone," one sublime ascent (and once repeated) that rang to heaven: it might have entered into the music of Jubal's lyre, or have glorified the timbrel of Miriam. All the rest, tried by the deep standard of my own feeling,—that clamours for the impassioned in music, even as the daughter of the horse-leech says, "Give, give,"—is as much without meaning as most of the Hebrew chanting that I heard at the Liverpool synagogue. I advise Mr. Murray, in the event of his ever reviving the "Antigone," to make the chorus sing the Hundredth Psalm rather than Mendelssohn's music, or, which would be better still, to import from Lancashire the Handel chorus-singers.

But then, again, whatever change in the music were made, so as to "better the condition" of the poor audience, something should really be done to "better the condition" of the poor chorus. Think of these worthy men, in their white and sky-blue liveries, kept standing the whole evening,—no seats allowed, no dancing, no tobacco; nothing to console them but Antigone's beauty; and all this in our climate, latitude fifty-five degrees, 30th of December, and Fahrenheit groping about, I don't pretend to know where, but clearly on his road down to the wine-cellar. Mr. Murray, I am perfectly sure, is too liberal to have grudged the expense, if he could have found any classic precedent for treating the chorus to a barrel of ale. Ale, he may object, is an unclassical tipple; but perhaps not. Xenophon, the most Attic of prose writers, mentions pointedly in his *Anabasis* that the Ten Thousand, when retreating through snowy mountains, and in circumstances very like our General Elphinstone's retreat from Cabul, came upon a considerable stock of bottled ale. To be sure, the poor ignorant man calls it *barley-wine* (οἶνος κριθινος): but the flavour was found so perfectly classical that not one man of the ten thousand, not even the Attic bee himself, is reported to have left any protest against it, or indeed to have left much of the ale.

But stop: perhaps I am intruding upon other men's space. Speaking, therefore, now finally to the principal question, How far did this memorable experiment succeed?

I reply that, in the sense of realizing all that the joint revivers proposed to realize, it succeeded, and failed only where these revivers had themselves failed to comprehend the magnificent tendencies of Greek Tragedy, or where the limitations of our theatres, arising out of our habits and social differences, had made it impossible to succeed. In London I believe that there are nearly thirty theatres, and many more if every place of amusement (not bearing the technical name of *theatre*) were included. All these must be united to compose a building such as that which received the vast audiences, and consequently the vast spectacles, of some ancient cities. And yet, from a great mistake in our London and Edinburgh attempts to imitate the stage of the Greek theatres, little use was made of such advantages as really *were* at our disposal. The possible depth of the Edinburgh stage was not laid open. Instead of a regal hall in Thebes, I protest I took it for the *boudoir* of Antigone. It was painted in light colours,—an error which was abominable, though possibly meant by the artist (but quite unnecessarily) as a proper ground for relieving the sumptuous dresses of the leading performers. The doors of entrance and exit were most unhappily managed. As to the dresses, those of Creon, of his queen, and of the two loyal sisters, were good: chaste, and yet princely. The dress of the chorus was as bad as bad could be: a few surplices borrowed from Episcopal chapels, or rather the ornamented *albes*, &c., from any rich Roman Catholic establishment, would have been more effective. The *Coryphæus* himself seemed, to my eyes, no better than a railway labourer, fresh from tunnelling or boring, and wearing a *blouse* to hide his working dress. These ill-used men ought to "strike" for better clothes, in case Antigone should again revisit the glimpses of an Edinburgh moon; and at the same time they might mutter a hint about the ale. But the great hindrances to a perfect restoration of a Greek tragedy lie in peculiarities of our theatres that cannot be removed, because bound up with their purposes. I suppose that Salisbury Plain would seem too vast a theatre; but at least a cathedral would be required in dimensions,—York Minster or Cologne. Lamp-light gives to us some advantages which

the ancients had not. But much art would be required to train and organize the lights and the masses of superincumbent gloom, that should be such as to allow no calculation of the dimensions overhead. Aboriginal night should brood over the scene, and the sweeping movements of the scenic groups: bodily expression should be given to the obscure feeling of that dark power which moved in ancient tragedy: and we should be made to know why it is that, with the one exception of the *Persæ*, founded on the second Persian invasion,[1]—in which Æschylus, the author, was personally a combatant, and therefore a *contemporary*,—not one of the thirty-four Greek tragedies surviving but recedes into the dusky shades of the heroic, or even fabulous, times.

A failure, therefore, I think the "Antigone," in relation to an object that for us is unattainable; but a failure worth more than many ordinary successes. We are all deeply indebted to Mr. Murray's liberality, in two senses,—to his liberal interest in the noblest section of ancient literature, and to his liberal disregard of expense. To have seen a Grecian play is a great remembrance. To have seen Miss Helen Faucit's Antigone, were *that* all, with her bust, ὡς ἀγαλματος,[2] and her uplifted arm "pleading against unjust tribunals," is worth—what is it worth? Worth the money? How mean a thought! To see *Helen*, to see Helen of Greece, was the chief prayer of Marlowe's Dr. Faustus,—the chief gift which he exacted from the fiend. To see Helen of Greece? Dr. Faustus, we *have* seen her: Mr. Murray is the Mephistopheles that showed her to us. It was cheap at the price of a journey to Siberia, and is the next best thing to having seen Waterloo at sunset on the 18th of June 1815.[3]

[1] But, in this instance, perhaps, distance of space, combined with the unrivalled grandeur of the war, was felt to equiponderate the distance of time,—Susa, the Persian capital of Susa, being fourteen hundred miles from Athens.

[2] Στερνα θ' ὡς ἀγαλματος, *her bosom as the bosom of a statue*: an expression of Euripides, and applied, I think, to Polyxena at the moment of her sacrifice on the tomb of Achilles, as the bride that was being married to him at the moment of his death.

[3] Amongst the questions which occurred to me as requiring an answer in connexion with this revival was one with regard to the comparative fitness of the Antigone for giving a representative idea of the Greek Stage. I am of opinion that it was the worst choice

which could have been made ; and for the very reason which no doubt governed that choice, viz. because the austerity of the tragic passion is disfigured by a love episode. Rousseau, in his letter to D'Alembert upon his article *Genève* in the French Encyclopédie, asks,—"*Qui est-ce qui doute que, sur nos théâtres, la meilleure pièce de Sophocle ne tombât tout-à-plat?*" And his reason (as collected from other passages) is—because an interest derived from the passion of sexual love can rarely be found on the Greek stage, and yet cannot be dispensed with on that of Paris. But why was it so rare on the Greek stage? Not from accident, but because it did not harmonize with the principle of that stage, and its vast overhanging gloom. It is the great infirmity of the French, and connected constitutionally with the gaiety of their temperament, that they cannot sympathize with this terrific mode of grandeur. We can. And for *us* the choice should have been more purely and severely Grecian ; whilst the slenderness of the plot in any Greek tragedy would require a far more effective support from tumultuous movement in the chorus. Even the French are not uniformly insensible to this Grecian grandeur. I remember that Voltaire, amongst many just remarks on the Electra of Sophocles, mixed with others that are *not* just, bitterly condemns this demand for a love fable on the French stage, and illustrates its extravagance by the French tragedy on the same subject of Crebillon. He (in default of any more suitable resource) has actually made Electra, whose character on the Greek stage is painfully vindictive, in love with an imaginary son of Ægisthus, her father's murderer.—Something should also have been said of Mrs. Leigh Murray's Ismene, which was very effective in supporting and in relieving the magnificent impression of Antigone. I ought also to have added a note on the scenic mask, and the common notion (not authorized, I am satisfied, by the practice in the *supreme* era of Pericles) that it exhibited a Janus face, the windward side exhibiting grief or horror, the leeward expressing tranquillity. Believe it not, reader. But on this and other points it will be better to speak circumstantially in a separate paper on the Greek Drama, as a majestic but very exclusive, and almost, if one may so say, bigoted, form of the scenic art.

ON THE KNOCKING AT THE GATE IN MACBETH[1]

From my boyish days I had always felt a great perplexity on one point in *Macbeth*. It was this:—The knocking at the gate which succeeds to the murder of Duncan produced to my feelings an effect for which I never could account. The effect was that it reflected back upon the murderer a peculiar awfulness and a depth of solemnity; yet, however obstinately I endeavoured with my understanding to comprehend this, for many years I never could see *why* it should produce such an effect.

Here I pause for one moment, to exhort the reader never to pay any attention to his understanding when it stands in opposition to any other faculty of his mind. The mere understanding, however useful and indispensable, is the meanest faculty in the human mind, and the most to be distrusted; and yet the great majority of people trust to nothing else,—which may do for ordinary life, but not for philosophical purposes. Of this out of ten thousand instances that I might produce I will cite one. Ask of any person whatsoever who is not previously prepared for the demand by a knowledge of the perspective to draw in the rudest way the commonest appearance which depends upon the laws of that science,—as, for instance, to represent the effect of two

[1] Appeared originally in the *London Magazine* for October 1823 as one of the scraps in the series contributed to that magazine under the title "Notes from the Pocket-Book of a Late Opium-Eater": reprinted in 1860 in the last or posthumous volume of De Quincey's edition of his Collected Writings. De Quincey had intended to enlarge it; but this was not done.—M.

walls standing at right angles to each other, or the appearance of the houses on each side of a street as seen by a person looking down the street from one extremity. Now, in all cases, unless the person has happened to observe in pictures how it is that artists produce these effects, he will be utterly unable to make the smallest approximation to it. Yet why? For he has actually seen the effect every day of his life. The reason is that he allows his understanding to overrule his eyes. His understanding, which includes no intuitive knowledge of the laws of vision, can furnish him with no reason why a line which is known and can be proved to be a horizontal line should not *appear* a horizontal line: a line that made any angle with the perpendicular less than a right angle would seem to him to indicate that his houses were all tumbling down together. Accordingly, he makes the line of his houses a horizontal line, and fails, of course, to produce the effect demanded. Here, then, is one instance out of many in which not only the understanding is allowed to overrule the eyes, but where the understanding is positively allowed to obliterate the eyes, as it were; for not only does the man believe the evidence of his understanding in opposition to that of his eyes, but (what is monstrous) the idiot is not aware that his eyes ever gave such evidence. He does not know that he has seen (and therefore *quoad* his consciousness has *not* seen) that which he *has* seen every day of his life.

But to return from this digression. My understanding could furnish no reason why the knocking at the gate in Macbeth should produce any effect, direct or reflected. In fact, my understanding said positively that it could *not* produce any effect. But I knew better; I felt that it did; and I waited and clung to the problem until further knowledge should enable me to solve it. At length, in 1812, Mr. Williams made his *début* on the stage of Ratcliffe Highway, and executed those unparalleled murders which have procured for him such a brilliant and undying reputation. On which murders, by the way, I must observe that in one respect they have had an ill effect, by making the connoisseur in murder very fastidious in his taste, and dissatisfied by anything that has been since done in that line. All other murders look pale by the deep crimson of his; and, as an amateur once

said to me in a querulous tone, "There has been absolutely nothing *doing* since his time, or nothing that's worth speaking of." But this is wrong; for it is unreasonable to expect all men to be great artists, and born with the genius of Mr. Williams.[1] Now, it will be remembered that in the first of these murders (that of the Marrs) the same incident (of a knocking at the door soon after the work of extermination was complete) did actually occur which the genius of Shakspere has invented; and all good judges, and the most eminent dilettanti, acknowledged the felicity of Shakspere's suggestion as soon as it was actually realized. Here, then, was a fresh proof that I was right in relying on my own feeling, in opposition to my understanding; and I again set myself to study the problem. At length I solved it to my own satisfaction; and my solution is this:—Murder, in ordinary cases, where the sympathy is wholly directed to the case of the murdered person, is an incident of coarse and vulgar horror; and for this reason,—that it flings the interest exclusively upon the natural but ignoble instinct by which we cleave to life: an instinct which, as being indispensable to the primal law of self-preservation, is the same in kind (though different in degree) amongst all living creatures. This instinct, therefore, because it annihilates all distinctions, and degrades the greatest of men to the level of "the poor beetle that we tread on," exhibits human nature in its most abject and humiliating attitude. Such an attitude would little suit the purposes of the poet. What then must he do? He must throw the interest on the murderer. Our sympathy must be with *him* (of course I mean a sympathy of comprehension, a sympathy by which we enter into his feelings, and are made to understand them,—not a sympathy of pity or approbation).[2] In

[1] A kind of presentiment of De Quincey's subsequent extravaganza called *Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts*,—in the complete form of which there is a special history of the Williams murders.—M.

[2] It seems almost ludicrous to guard and explain my use of a word in a situation where it would naturally explain itself. But it has become necessary to do so, in consequence of the unscholarlike use of the word sympathy, at present so general, by which, instead of taking it in its proper sense, as the act of reproducing in our minds the feelings of another, whether for hatred, indignation, love, pity, or approbation, it is made a mere synonyme of the word *pity*; and hence,

the murdered person, all strife of thought, all flux and reflux of passion and of purpose, are crushed by one overwhelming panic ; the fear of instant death smites him " with its petrific mace." But in the murderer, such a murderer as a poet will condescend to, there must be raging some great storm of passion,—jealousy, ambition, vengeance, hatred,—which will create a hell within him ; and into this hell we are to look.

In *Macbeth*, for the sake of gratifying his own enormous and teeming faculty of creation, Shakspere has introduced two murderers : and, as usual in his hands, they are remarkably discriminated : but,—though in Macbeth the strife of mind is greater than in his wife, the tiger spirit not so awake, and his feelings caught chiefly by contagion from her,—yet, as both were finally involved in the guilt of murder, the murderous mind of necessity is finally to be presumed in both. This was to be expressed ; and, on its own account, as well as to make it a more proportionable antagonist to the unoffending nature of their victim, " the gracious Duncan," and adequately to expound " the deep damnation of his taking off," this was to be expressed with peculiar energy. We were to be made to feel that the human nature,—*i.e.* the divine nature of love and mercy, spread through the hearts of all creatures, and seldom utterly withdrawn from man,—was gone, vanished, extinct, and that the fiendish nature had taken its place. And, as this effect is marvellously accomplished in the *dialogues* and *soliloquies* themselves, so it is finally consummated by the expedient under consideration ; and it is to this that I now solicit the reader's attention. If the reader has ever witnessed a wife, daughter, or sister in a fainting fit, he may chance to have observed that the most affecting moment in such a spectacle is *that* in which a sigh and a stirring announce the recommencement of suspended life. Or, if the reader has ever been present in a vast metropolis on the day when some great national idol was carried in funeral pomp to his grave, and, chancing to walk near the course through which it passed, has felt powerfully, in the silence and desertion of the streets, and in the stagnation of ordinary business, the deep interest which at that

instead of saying "sympathy *with* another," many writers adopt the monstrous barbarism of "sympathy *for* another."

moment was possessing the heart of man,—if all at once he should hear the death-like stillness broken up by the sound of wheels rattling away from the scene, and making known that the transitory vision was dissolved, he will be aware that at no moment was his sense of the complete suspension and pause in ordinary human concerns so full and affecting as at that moment when the suspension ceases, and the goings-on of human life are suddenly resumed. All action in any direction is best expounded, measured, and made apprehensible, by reaction. Now, apply this to the case in *Macbeth*. Here, as I have said, the retiring of the human heart and the entrance of the fiendish heart was to be expressed and made sensible. Another world has stept in; and the murderers are taken out of the region of human things, human purposes, human desires. They are transfigured: Lady Macbeth is "unsexed"; Macbeth has forgot that he was born of woman; both are conformed to the image of devils; and the world of devils is suddenly revealed. But how shall this be conveyed and made palpable? In order that a new world may step in, this world must for a time disappear. The murderers and the murder must be insulated—cut off by an immeasurable gulf from the ordinary tide and succession of human affairs — locked up and sequestered in some deep recess; we must be made sensible that the world of ordinary life is suddenly arrested, laid asleep, tranced, racked into a dread armistice; time must be annihilated, relation to things without abolished; and all must pass self-withdrawn into a deep syncope and suspension of earthly passion. Hence it is that, when the deed is done, when the work of darkness is perfect, then the world of darkness passes away like a pageantry in the clouds: the knocking at the gate is heard, and it makes known audibly that the reaction has commenced; the human has made its reflux upon the fiendish; the pulses of life are beginning to beat again; and the re-establishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live first makes us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended them.

O mighty poet! Thy works are not as those of other men, simply and merely great works of art, but are also like the phenomena of nature, like the sun and the sea, the

stars and the flowers, like frost and snow, rain and dew, hail-storm and thunder, which are to be studied with entire submission of our own faculties, and in the perfect faith that in them there can be no too much or too little, nothing useless or inert, but that, the farther we press in our discoveries, the more we shall see proofs of design and self-supporting arrangement where the careless eye had seen nothing but accident!

ON MILTON[1]

We have two ideas which we are anxious to bring under public notice with regard to Milton. The reader whom Providence shall send us will not measure the value of these ideas (we trust and hope) by their bulk. The reader indeed—that great idea!—is very often a more important person towards the fortune of an essay than the writer. Even "the prosperity of a jest," as Shakspere tells us, lies less in its own merit than "in the ear of him that hears it." If *he* should happen to be unusually obtuse, the wittiest jest perishes, the most pointed is found blunt. So, with regard to books, should the reader on whom we build prove a sandy and treacherous foundation, the whole edifice, "temple and tower," must come to the ground. Should it happen, for instance, that the reader, inflicted upon ourselves for our sins, belongs to that class of people who listen to books in the ratio of their much speaking, find no eloquence in 32mo, and little force of argument except in such a folio as might knock him down upon occasion of his proving restive against its logic—in that case he will despise our present essay. *Will* despise it? He *does* despise it, for already he sees that it is short. His contempt is a high *a priori* contempt; for he measures us by anticipation, and needs to wait for no experience in order to vindicate his sentence against us.

Yet, in one view, this brevity of an essayist does seem to warrant his reader in some little indignation. We, the

[1] Published first in *Blackwood* for December 1839: reprinted by De Quincey in 1857, in vol. vii of his Collective Edition of his Writings.—M.

writer, in many cases expect to bring over the reader to our opinion—else wherefore do we write? But, within so small a compass of ground, is it reasonable to look for such a result? "Bear witness to the presumption of this essay," we hear the reader complaining: "it measures about fourteen inches by five—seventy square inches at the most; and is it within human belief that I, simple as I stand here, shall be converted in so narrow an area? Here am I in a state of nature, as you may say. An acre of sound argument might do something; but here is a man who flatters himself that, before I am advanced seven inches further in my studies, he is to work a notable change in my creed. By Castor and Pollux! he must think very superbly of himself, or very meanly of me."

Too true; but perhaps there are faults on both sides. The writer is too peremptory and exacting; the reader is too restive. The writer is too full of his office, which he fancies is that of a teacher or a professor speaking *ex cathedra*: the rebellious reader is oftentimes too determined that he will not learn. The one conceits himself booted and spurred, and mounted on his reader's back, with an express commission for riding him; the other is vicious, apt to bolt out of the course at every opening, and resolute in this point,—that he will not be ridden.

There are some, meantime, who take a very different view of the relations existing between those well-known parties to a book—writer and reader. So far from regarding the writer as entitled to the homage of his reader, as if he were some feudal superior, they hold him little better than an actor bowing before the reader as his audience. The feudal relation of fealty [1] (*fidelitas*) may subsist between them, but the places are inverted: the writer is the vassal; the reader

[1] Which word *fealty* I entreat the reader, for the credit of his own scholarship, not to pronounce as a dissyllable, but *fe-al-ty*, as a trisyllable; else he ruins the metrical beauty of Chaucer, of Shakspere, of Spenser, of Milton, and of every poet through four centuries (the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, down to 1699), and finally registers himself as an *ignoramus* and a blockhead. For the reason lies in the etymology: it is a contracted form of *fidelité*, or feudal loyalty. How does the reader pronounce *real*, or *reality*? Surely he does not say *reel* or *reelity*: if re-al, then he can say fe-al.

it is who claims to be the sovereign. Our own opinion inclines this way. It is clear that the writer exists for the sake of the reader, not the reader for the sake of the writer. Besides, the writer bears all sorts of characters, whilst the reader universally has credit for the best. We have all heard of "the courteous reader," "the candid reader," "the enlightened reader"; but which of us ever heard of "the discourteous reader," "the mulish reader," "the barbarous reader"? Doubtless there is no such person. The Goths and Vandals are all confined to the writers. "The reader"—that great character—is ever wise, ever learned, ever courteous. Even in the worst of times this great man preserved his purity. Even in the tenth and eleventh centuries, which we usually account the very noontide of darkness, he shone like a mould candle amongst basest dips. And perhaps it is our duty to presume all other virtues and graces as no less essential to him than his glorious "candour," his "courtesy" (surpassing that of Sir Gawain [1]), and his truly "enlightened" understanding. Indeed, we very much question whether a writer who carries with him a just feeling of his allegiance—a truly loyal writer—can lawfully suppose his sovereign, the reader, peccable or capable of error, and whether there is not even a shade of impiety in conceiving him liable to the affections of sleep or of yawning.

Having thus, upon our knees, as it were, done feudal homage to our great *suzerain*, the reader—having propitiated him with Persian adorations and with Phrygian genuflexions—let us now crave leave to convert him a little. Convert him!—that sounds "*un peu fort*," does it not? No, not at all. A cat may look at a king; and upon this or that out-of-the-way point a writer may presume to be more knowing than his reader—the serf may undertake to convert his lord. The reader is a great being—a great noun-substantive; but still, like a mere abjective, he is liable to the three degrees of comparison. He may rise above himself—he may transcend the ordinary level of readers, however exalted that level be. Being great, he may become greater. Full of light, he may yet labour with a spot or two of darkness. And

[1] "*Sir Gawain*":—In all the old metrical romances this knight is celebrated for his unique courtesy.

such a spot we hold the prevalent opinion upon Milton in two particular questions of taste: questions that are not insulated, but diffusive; spreading themselves over the entire surface of the "Paradise Lost," and also of the "Paradise Regained"; insomuch that, if Milton is wrong once, then he is wrong by many scores of times. Nay—which transcends all counting of cases or numerical estimates of error—if in the separate instances (be they few or be they many) Milton is truly and indeed wrong, then he has erred, not by the case, but by the principle; and that is a thousand times worse: for a separate case or instance of error may escape any man —may have been overlooked amongst the press of objects crowding on his eye, or, if *not* overlooked, if passed deliberately, may plead the ordinary privilege of human frailty. The man erred, and his error terminates in itself. But an error of principle does *not* terminate in itself: it is a fountain, it is self-diffusive, and it has a life of its own. The faults of a great man are in any case contagious; they are dazzling and delusive, by means of the great man's general example. But his false principles have a worse contagion. They operate not only through the general haze and halo which invests a shining example; but, even if transplanted where that example is unknown, they propagate themselves by the vitality inherent in all self-consistent principles, whether true or false.

Before we notice these two cases of Milton, first of all let us ask — Who and what *is* Milton? Dr. Johnson was furiously incensed with a certain man, by trade an author and manufacturer of books, wholesale and retail, for introducing Milton's name into a certain index under the letter M thus—"Milton, Mr. John." That *Mister*, undoubtedly, was hard to digest. Yet very often it happens to the best of us—to men who are far enough from "thinking small beer of themselves"—that about ten o'clock A.M. an official big-wig, sitting at Bow Street, calls upon the man to account for his *sprees* of the last night, for his feats in knocking down lamp-posts, and extinguishing watchmen, by this ugly demand of—"Who and what are you, sir?" And perhaps the poor man, sick and penitential for want of soda-water, really finds a considerable difficulty in replying

satisfactorily to the worthy *beak's* apostrophe, although, at five o'clock in the evening, should the culprit be returning into the country in the same coach as his awful interrogator, he might be very apt to look fierce and retort this amiable inquiry, and with equal thirst for knowledge to demand, "Now, sir, if you come to *that*, who and what are *you*?" And the *beak* in *his* turn, though so apt to indulge his own curiosity at the expense of the public, might find it very difficult to satisfy that of others.

The same thing happens to authors; and to great authors beyond all others. So accustomed are we to survey a great man through the cloud of years that has gathered round him—so impossible is it to detach him from the pomp and equipage of all who have quoted him, copied him, echoed him, lectured about him, disputed about him, quarrelled about him, that in the case of any Anacharsis the Scythian coming amongst us—any savage, that is to say, uninstructed in our literature, but speaking our language, and feeling an intelligent interest in our great men[1]—a man could hardly believe at first how perplexed he would feel, how utterly at a loss for any *adequate* answer to this question, suddenly proposed—"*Who and what was Milton?*" That is to say, what is the place which he fills in his own vernacular literature? what station does he hold in universal literature?

I, if abruptly called upon in that summary fashion to convey a *commensurate* idea of Milton, one which might at once correspond to his pretensions, and yet be readily intelligible to the savage, should answer perhaps thus:—Milton is not an author amongst authors, not a poet amongst poets, but a power amongst powers; and the "Paradise Lost" is not a book amongst books, not a poem amongst poems, but a central force amongst forces. Let me explain:—There is this great distinction amongst books: some, though possibly the best in their class, are still no more than books—not indispensable, not incapable of supplementary representation by other books. If they had never been, if their place had continued for ages unfilled, not the less, upon a sufficient

[1] Anacharsis, a Scythian prince mentioned by Herodotus as having visited Athens in the time of Solon and obtained a high reputation for intelligence.—M.

excitement arising, there would always have been found the ability either directly to fill up the vacancy, or at least to meet the same passion virtually, though by a work differing in form. Thus, supposing Butler to have died in youth, and the "Hudibras" to have been intercepted by his premature death, still the ludicrous aspects of the Parliamentary War and its fighting saints were too striking to have perished. If not in a narrative form, the case would have come forward in the drama. Puritanical sanctity, in collision with the ordinary interests of life and with its militant propensities, offered too striking a field for the Satiric Muse, in any case, to have passed in total neglect. The impulse was too strong for repression—it was a volcanic agency, that, by some opening or other, must have worked a way for itself to the upper air. Yet Butler was a most original poet, and a creator within his own province. But, like many another original mind, there is little doubt that he quelled and repressed, by his own excellence, other minds of the same cast. Mere despair of excelling him, so far as not, after all, to seem imitators, drove back others who would have pressed into that arena, if not already brilliantly filled. Butler failing, there would have been another Butler, either in the same, or in some analogous form.

But with regard to Milton and the Miltonic power the case is far otherwise. If the man had failed, the power would have failed. In that mode of power which he wielded the function was exhausted in the man, the species was identified with the individual, the poetry was incarnated in the poet.

Let it be remembered that, of all powers which act upon man through his intellectual nature, the very rarest is that which we moderns call the *sublime*. The Grecians had apparently no word for it, unless it were that which they meant by το σεμνον: for ὕψος was a comprehensive expression for all qualities which gave a character of life or animation to the composition,—such even as were philosophically opposed to the sublime. In the Roman poetry, and especially in Lucan, at times also in Juvenal, there is an exhibition of a moral sublime, perfectly distinct from anything known to the Greek poetry. The delineations of

republican grandeur, as expressing itself through the principal leaders in the Roman camps, or the trampling under foot of ordinary superstitions, as given in the reasons assigned to Labienus for passing the oracle of the Libyan Jupiter unconsulted, are in a style to which there is nothing corresponding in the whole Grecian literature; nor would they have been comprehensible to an Athenian. The famous line "Jupiter est quodcunque vides, quocunque moveris," and the brief review of such questions as might be worthy of an oracular god, with the summary declaration that every one of those points we know already by the light of nature, and could not know them better though Jupiter Ammon himself were to impress them on our attention—

"Scimus, et hæc nobis non altius inseret Ammon":
"We know it, and no Ammon will ever sink it deeper into our hearts":

all this is truly Roman in its sublimity, and so exclusively Roman that there, and not in poets like the Augustan, expressly modelling their poems on Grecian types, ought the Roman mind to be studied.

On the other hand, for that species of the sublime which does not rest purely and merely on moral energies, but on a synthesis between man and nature—for what may properly be called the ethico-physical sublime—there is but one great model surviving in the Greek poetry: viz. the gigantic drama of the Prometheus crucified on Mount Elborus. And this drama differs so much from everything else even in the poetry of Æschylus,—as the mythus itself differs so much from all the rest of the Grecian mythology (belonging apparently to an age and a people more gloomy, austere, and nearer to the *incunabula mundi* than those which bred the gay and sunny superstitions of Greece),—that much curiosity and speculation have naturally gathered round the subject of late years. Laying this one insulated case apart, and considering that the Hebrew poetry of Isaiah and Ezekiel, as having the benefit of inspiration, does not lie within the just limits of competition, we may affirm that there is no human composition which can be challenged as constitutionally sublime,—sublime equally by its conception and by its execution, or as

uniformly sublime from first to last,—excepting the "Paradise Lost." In Milton only, first and last, is the power of the sublime revealed. In Milton only does this great agency blaze and glow as a furnace kept up to a white heat, without suspicion of collapse.

If, therefore, Milton occupies this unique position—and let the reader question himself closely whether he can cite any other book than the "Paradise Lost" as continuously sublime, or sublime even by its prevailing character—in that case there is a peculiarity of importance investing that one book which belongs to no other; and it must be important to dissipate any erroneous notions which affect the integrity of that book's estimation. Now, there are two notions, countenanced by Addison and by Dr. Johnson, which tend greatly to disparage the character of its composition. If the two critics, one friendly, the other very malignant, but both endeavouring to be just, have in reality built upon sound principles, or at least upon a sound appreciation of Milton's principles, in that case there is a mortal taint diffused over the whole of the "Paradise Lost": for not a single book is clear of one or other of the two errors which they charge upon him. We will briefly state the objections, and then as briefly reply to them, by exposing the true philosophy of Milton's practice. For we are very sure that, in doing as he did, this mighty poet was governed by no carelessness or oversight (as is imagined), far less by affectation or ostentation, but by a most refined theory of poetic effects.

1. The first of these two charges respects a supposed pedantry, or too ambitious a display of erudition. It is surprising to us that such an objection should have occurred to any man: both because, after all, the quantity of learning cannot be great for which any poem can find an opening; and because, in any poem burning with concentrated fire, like the Miltonic, the passion becomes a law to itself, and will not receive into connexion with itself any parts so deficient in harmony as a cold ostentation of learned illustrations must always have been found. Still, it is alleged that such words as *frieze*, *architrave*, *cornice*, *zenith*, &c., are words of art, out of place amongst the primitive simplicities

of Paradise, and at war with Milton's purpose of exhibiting the paradisaical state.

Now, here is displayed broadly the very perfection of ignorance, as measured against the very perfection of what may be called poetic science. We will lay open the true purpose of Milton by a single illustration. In describing impressive scenery as occurring in a hilly or a woody country, everybody must have noticed the habit which young ladies have of using the word *amphitheatre*: "amphitheatre of woods," "amphitheatre of hills"—these are their constant expressions. Why? Is it because the word *amphitheatre* is a Grecian word? We question if one young lady in twenty knows that it is; and very certain we are that no word would recommend itself to her use by that origin, if she happened to be aware of it. The reason lurks here:—In the word *theatre* is contained an evanescent image of a great audience, of a populous multitude. Now, this image—half-withdrawn, half-flashed upon the eye, and combined with the word *hills* or *forests*—is thrown into powerful collision with the silence of hills, with the solitude of forests; each image, from reciprocal contradiction, brightens and vivifies the other. The two images act, and react, by strong repulsion and antagonism.

This principle I might exemplify and explain at great length; but I impose a law of severe brevity upon myself. And I have said enough. Out of this one principle of subtle and lurking antagonism may be explained everything which has been denounced under the idea of pedantry in Milton. It is the key to all that lavish pomp of art and knowledge which is sometimes put forward by Milton in situations of intense solitude, and in the bosom of primitive nature—as, for example, in the Eden of his great poem, and in the Wilderness of his "Paradise Regained." The shadowy exhibition of a regal banquet in the desert draws out and stimulates the sense of its utter solitude and remotion from men or cities. The images of architectural splendour suddenly raised in the very centre of Paradise, as vanishing shows by the wand of a magician, bring into powerful relief the depth of silence and the unpopulous solitude which possess this sanctuary of man whilst yet happy and innocent.

Paradise could not in any other way, or by any artifice less profound, have been made to give up its essential and differential characteristics in a form palpable to the imagination. As a place of rest, it was necessary that it should be placed in close collision with the unresting strife of cities; as a place of solitude, with the image of tumultuous crowds; as the centre of mere natural beauty in its gorgeous prime, with the images of elaborate architecture and of human workmanship; as a place of perfect innocence in seclusion, that it should be exhibited as the antagonist pole to the sin and misery of social man.

Such is the covert philosophy which governs Milton's practice, and which might be illustrated by many scores of passages from both the "Paradise Lost" and the "Paradise Regained."[1] In fact, a volume might be composed on this one chapter. And yet, from the blindness or inconsiderate examination of his critics, this latent wisdom, this cryptical science of poetic effects, in the mighty poet has been misinterpreted, and set down to the effect of defective skill, or even of puerile ostentation.

2. The second great charge against Milton is, *prima facie*, even more difficult to meet. It is the charge of having blended the Pagan and Christian forms. The great realities of Angels and Archangels are continually combined into the same groups with the fabulous impersonations of the Greek Mythology. Eve is interlinked in comparisons with Pandora, with Aurora, with Proserpine. Those impersonations, however, may be thought to have something of allegoric meaning in their conceptions which in a measure corrects this paganism of the idea. But Eve is also compared with Ceres, with Hebe, and other fixed forms of pagan superstition. Other

[1] For instance, this is the key to that image in the "Paradise Regained" where Satan, on first emerging into sight, is compared to an old man gathering sticks, "to warm him on a winter's day." This image, at first sight, seems little in harmony with the wild and awful character of the supreme fiend. No; it is *not in* harmony, nor is it meant to be in harmony. On the contrary, it is meant to be in antagonism and intense repulsion. The household image of old age, of human infirmity, and of domestic hearths, are all meant as a machinery for provoking and soliciting the fearful idea to which they are placed in collision, and as so many repelling poles.

allusions to the Greek mythologic forms, or direct combination of them with the real existences of the Christian heavens, might be produced by scores, were it not that we decline to swell our paper beyond the necessity of the case. Now, surely this at least is an error. Can there be any answer to this?

At one time we were ourselves inclined to fear that Milton had been here caught tripping. In this instance, at least, he seems to be in error. But there is no trusting to appearances. In meditating upon the question, we happened to remember that the most colossal and Miltonic of painters had fallen into the very same fault, if fault it were. In his "Last Judgment" Michael Angelo has introduced the pagan deities in connexion with the hierarchy of the Christian Heavens. Now, it is very true that one great man cannot palliate the error of another great man by repeating the same error himself. But, though it cannot avail as an excuse, such a conformity of ideas serves as a summons to a much more vigilant examination of the case than might else be instituted. One man might err from inadvertency; but that two, and both men trained to habits of constant meditation, should fall into the same error, makes the marvel tenfold greater.

Now, we confess that, as to Michael Angelo, we do not pretend to assign the precise key to the practice which he adopted. And to our feelings, after all that might be said in apology, there still remains an impression of incongruity in the visual exhibition and direct juxtaposition of the two orders of supernatural existence so potently repelling each other. But, as regards Milton, the justification is complete. It rests upon the following principle:—

In all other parts of Christianity the two orders of superior beings, the Christian Heaven and the Pagan Pantheon, are felt to be incongruous—not as the pure opposed to the impure (for, if that were the reason, then the Christian fiends should be incongruous with the angels, which they are not), but as the unreal opposed to the real. In all the hands of other poets we feel that Jupiter, Mercury, Apollo, Diana, are not merely impure conceptions, but that they are baseless conceptions, phantoms of air, nonentities; there is much

the same objection, in point of just taste, to the combination of such fabulous beings in the same groups with glorified saints and angels as there is to the combination by a painter or a sculptor of real flesh-and-blood creatures with allegoric abstractions.

This is the objection to such combination in all other poets. But this objection does not apply to Milton; it glances past him, and for the following reason:—Milton has himself laid an early foundation for his introduction of the Pagan Pantheon into Christian groups: *the false gods of the heathen world were, according to Milton, the fallen Angels.* See his inimitable account of the fallen angels—who and what they subsequently became. In itself, and even if detached from the rest of the "Paradise Lost," this catalogue is an *ultra*-magnificent poem. They are not false, therefore, in the sense of being unreal, baseless, and having a merely fantastical existence, like our European Fairies, but as having drawn aside mankind from a pure worship. As ruined angels under other names, they are no less real than the faithful and loyal angels of the Christian heavens. And in that one difference of the Miltonic creed, which the poet has brought pointedly and elaborately under his reader's notice by his matchless roll-call of the rebellious angels, and of *their pagan transformations*, in the very first book of the "Paradise Lost," is laid beforehand [1] the amplest foundation for his subsequent practice, and at the same time, therefore, the amplest answer to the charge preferred against him by Dr. Johnson, and by so many other critics, who had not sufficiently penetrated the latent theory on which he acted.

[1] Other celebrated poets have laid no such preparatory foundations for their intermixture of heathen gods with the heavenly host of the Christian revelation; for example, amongst thousands of others, Tasso, and still more flagrantly Camoens, who is not content with allusions or references that suppose the Pagan Mythology still substantially existing, but absolutely introduces them as potent agencies amongst superstitious and bigoted worshippers of papal saints. Consequently, they, beyond all apology, are open to the censure which for Milton is subtly evaded.

POSTSCRIPT[1]

THE short paper entitled "Milton" defends that mighty poet upon two separate impeachments—applying themselves (as the reader will please to recollect) not to scattered sentences occurring here and there, but to the whole texture of the "Paradise Lost," and also of the "Paradise Regained." One of these impeachments is that the poet, incongruously as regarded *taste*, but also injuriously, or almost profanely, as regarded the *pieties* of his theme, introduces the mythologies of Paganism amongst the saintly hierarchies of Revelation,—takes away, in short, the barrier of separation between the impure mobs of the Pantheon and the holy armies of the Christian heavens. The other impeachment applies to Milton's introduction of thoughts, or images, or facts, connected with human art, and suggesting, however evanescently, the presence of man co-operating with man, and the tumult of social multitudes, amidst the primeval silence of Paradise, or again (as in the "Paradise Regained") amidst the more fearful solitudes of the Arabian wilderness. These charges were first of all urged by Addison, but more than half-a-century afterwards were indorsed by Dr. Johnson. Addison was the inaugural critic on Milton, coming forward in the early part of the eighteenth century (viz. in the opening months of

[1] What is here printed as a Postscript was part of De Quincey's Preface in 1857 to the volume of his Collected Writings which contained his reprint of the preceding paper. It substantially repeats portions of the paper itself, though with some differences.—M.

1712, when as yet Milton had not been dead for so much as forty years [1]); but Dr. Johnson, who followed him at a distance of more than sixty years in the same century, told upon his own generation, and generally upon the English literature, as a critic of more weight and power. It is certain, however, that Addison, by his very deficiencies, by his feebleness of grasp, and his immaturity of development in most walks of critical research, did a service to Milton incomparably greater than all other critics collectively—were it only by its seasonableness; for it came at the very vestibule of Milton's career as a poet militant amongst his countrymen, who had his popular acceptation yet to win after the eighteenth century had commenced. Just at this critical moment it was that Addison stepped in to give the initial bias to the national mind—that bias which intercepted any other.[2] So far, and

[1] Addison's celebrated series of criticisms on *Paradise Lost* began in the *Spectator* of 5th January 1711-12, and closed on the 3d of May following.—M.

[2] "*Intercepted any other*": —What other? the reader will ask. In writing the words, I meant no more than, generally, that a very favourable bias, once established, would limit the openings for alienated or hostile feelings. But of such feelings, on second thoughts, it was obvious that one mode there was specially threatening to Milton's cordial and household welcome through Great Britain — that mode which secretly at all times, often avowedly, governed Dr. Johnson—viz. the permanent feud with Milton through his political party. But the feud took often a more embittered shape than *that*. Milton's party was republican. But Milton individually had a worse quarrel to settle than this. All republicans were not regicides; and Milton *was*. Virtually he was regarded by numbers as a regicide, and even under a rancorous aggravation,—one who evaded by a verbal refinement the penalties of any statutable offence connected with the king's death, whilst he exhibited a malice directed against the king's person more settled and inexorable than any other man throughout the three nations. It is true he had not sat in judgment on the king; he had not signed the warrant for his execution. Not through any scruples, legal or otherwise; but simply as not summoned, by any *official* station, to such a step. He had therefore given no *antecedent* sanction to the king's judicial treatment in Westminster Hall, or on the scaffold. [His *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, however, was in progress before the king's execution; and on that evidence Milton might have been indicted as an accessory before the fact.—M.] But, extrajudicially, and *subsequently*, he had gone further in acrimonious invectives against the king, and in sharpening the offences charged upon him, than any man who stood forward prominently at the time.

perhaps secretly through some other modes of aid, Addison had proved (as I have called him) the most *seasonable* of allies: but this critic possessed also another commanding gift towards the winning of popularity, whether for himself or for those he patronised—in his style, in the quality of his thoughts, and in his facility of explaining them luminously and with natural grace.[1]

Very few went the length of Milton. Besides his vindication of the king's punishment, he had deeply and specially offended a great multitude of the royal partisans by his Eiconoklastes (image-breaker, or idol-breaker): breaker of what image? Of the *Eicon Basilike—i.e.* the Royal Image, which professed to publish the king's private memoranda and religious reflections upon the chief incidents of the war. Had the king really written or dictated such a work? That question remains wrapped up in mystery to this day. But Milton, aware of the doubts as to the authentic authorship of the little book, had so managed his Eiconoklast as to meet either hypothesis—viz. that Charles was, or that he was *not*, the author. The wrath, therefore, of those who worshipped the *Eicon*, as exhibiting the king in a character of saintly and forgiving charity, passed all bounds towards the man who had rudely unmasked the forgery, if it were a forgery, or unmasked the pretender to a charity which he counterfeited—if really the king.——Let me add, at the conclusion of this note, that, considering how many public men of the Republican party were at that time assassinated, it remains a great mystery how it happened that Milton died in his bed. This was a great distinction, and (one would hope) conceded to his sublime intellectual claims, though as yet imperfectly established. But, a very few years after his death, a more conspicuous distinction was made in his favour. In the meridian heat of the Revolution poor old General Ludlow (an honest man, if any there was in those frenzied days) ventured from his alpine asylum into the publicity of London, but was sternly (some think brutally) ordered off by Parliament, as a mode of advertising their discountenance to regicide. No other questionable act was imputed to the gallant old commander of Cromwell's cavalry. He had co-operated too ardently in promoting the king to martyrdom. At that very time, the Whigs, to their great honour — especially two of their most distinguished men, Somers and Addison — were patronising by a fervent subscription a splendid edition of Milton, who outran Ludlow as much in his regicidal zeal as he did in the grandeur of his intellect.

[1] The notion that it was Addison's series of papers in the *Spectator* that first awoke the English nation to a sense of Milton's greatness is a sheer hallucination. There had been nine editions of *Paradise Lost*, eight of *Paradise Regained*, seven of *Samson*, and six of the Minor Poems before Addison's criticisms appeared,—some of the editions in superb form, and one of them accompanied by a vast commentary; and the laudations of Milton had been already innumerable,—one of

Dr. Johnson, without any distinct acknowledgment, adopted both these charges from Addison. But it is singular that, whilst Addison—who does himself great honour by the reverential tenderness which everywhere he shows to Milton—has urged these supposed reproaches with some amplitude of expression and illustration, Dr. Johnson, on the other hand—whose malignity towards Milton is unrelenting, on account of his republican and regicide politics—dismisses both these reproaches with apparent carelessness and haste.[1] What he says in reference to the grouping of Pagan with Christian imagery or impersonations is simply this:—"The "mythologic allusions have been justly censured, as not being "always used with notice of their vanity." The word *vanity* is here used in an old-world Puritanical sense for falsehood or visionariness. In what relations the Pagan gods may be pronounced false would allow of a far profounder inquiry than is suspected by the wording of the passage quoted. It is, besides, to be observed that, even if undoubtedly and confessedly false, any creed which has for ages been the object of a cordial assent from an entire race, or from many nations of men, or a belief which (like the belief in ghostly apparitions) rests upon eternal predispositions and natural tendencies in man as a being surrounded by mysteries, is entitled by an irresistible claim to a secondary faith from those even who reject it, and to a respect such as could not be demanded, for example, on behalf of any capricious fiction, like that of the Rosicrucian sylphs and gnomes, invented in a known year and by an assignable man.[2]

them Dryden's unsurpassable eulogium of 1688. In fact, it can be proved that the sale of Milton's poems was for some time after the appearance of Addison's criticisms slacker than it had been before. —M.

[1] An angry notice of the equivocation in "Lycidas" between Christian teachers, figuratively described as shepherds, and the actual shepherds of rural economy, recalls to the reader (as do so many other explosions of the doctor's temper) a veritable Malachi Malagrowther: he calls it *indecent*. But there is no allusion to the faulty intermingling of Pagan with Christian groups.

[2] The sentiment here may be taken as slightly modifying a remark made *ante*, Vol. VIII, p. 5; but very slightly; and the date of the present passage is 1857.—M.

None of us, at this day, who lived in continual communication with cities, have any lingering faith in the race of fairies: but yet, as a class of beings consecrated by immemorial traditions, and dedicated to the wild solitudes of nature, and to the shadowy illumination of moonlight, we grant them a toleration of dim faith and old ancestral love —as, for instance, in the "Midsummer Night's Dream"— very much as we might suppose granted to some decaying superstition that was protected lovingly by the *children* of man's race against the too severe and eiconoklastic wisdom of their parents.

The other charge of obtruding upon the reader an excess of scientific allusions, or of knowledge harshly technical, Dr. Johnson notices even still more slightly in this very negligent sentence:—"His unnecessary and ungraceful use of terms of "art it is not necessary to mention, because they are easily "remarked and generally censured." Unaccountably Dr. Johnson forbears to press this accusation against Milton. But generally, even in the forbearances or indulgent praises of Dr. Johnson, we stumble on the hoof of a Malagrowther; whilst, on the contrary, the direct censures of Addison are so managed as to furnish occasions of oblique homage. There is a remarkable instance of this in the very mechanism and arrangement of his long essay on the "Paradise Lost." In No. 297 of the "Spectator" he enters upon that least agreeable section of this essay which is occupied with passing in review the chief blemishes of this great poem. But Addison shrank with so much honourable pain from this unwelcome office that he would not undertake it at all until he had premised a distinct paper (No. 291), one whole week beforehand, for the purpose of propitiating the most idolatrous reader of Milton, by showing that he sought rather to take this office of fault-finding out of hands that might prove less trustworthy than to court any gratification to his own vanity in a momentary triumph over so great a man. After this conciliatory preparation, no man can complain of Addison's censures, even when groundless.

With most of these censures, whether well or ill founded, I do not here concern myself. The two with which I *do*,

and which seem to me unconsciously directed against modes of sensibility in Milton not fathomed by the critic, nor lying within depths ever likely to be fathomed by *his* plummet, I will report in Addison's own words :—"Another "blemish, that appears in some of his thoughts, is his frequent "allusion to heathen fables; which are not certainly of a "piece with the divine subject of which he treats. I do not "find fault with these allusions where the poet himself "represents them as fabulous, as he does in some places, but "where he mentions them as truths and matters of fact. A "third fault in his sentiments is an unnecessary ostentation "of learning; which likewise occurs very frequently. It is "certain [indeed !] that both Homer and Virgil were masters "of all the learning of their time: but it shows itself in "their works after an indirect and concealed manner." Certainly after a *very* concealed manner,—*so* concealed that no man has been able to find it!

These two charges against Milton being lodged, and entered upon the way-bill of the "Paradise Lost" in its journey down to posterity, Addison makes a final censure on the poem in reference to its diction. Fortunately, upon such a question it may be possible hereafter to obtain a revision of this sentence, governed by canons less arbitrary than the feelings, or perhaps the transient caprices, of individuals. For the present I should have nothing to do with this question upon the Miltonic diction, were it not that Addison has thought fit to subdivide this last fault in the "Paradise Lost" (as he considers it) into three separate modes. The first[1] and the second do not concern my present purpose: but the third *does*. "This lies," says Addison, "in the "frequent use of what the learned call technical words, or "terms of art." And amongst other illustrations, he says that Milton, "when he is upon building, mentions Doric "pillars, pilasters, cornice, frieze, architrave." This in

[1] It is a singular weakness in Addison that, having assigned this first feature of Milton's diction—viz. its supposed dependence on exotic words and on exotic idioms—as the main cause of his failure, he then makes it the main cause of his success, since without such words and idioms Milton could not (he says) have sustained his characteristic sublimity.

effect is little more than a varied expression for the second of those two objections to the "Paradise Lost" which Addison originated and Dr. Johnson adopted. To these it is, and these only, that my little paper replies.

QUESTION AS TO ACTUAL SLIPS IN MILTON[1]

It would not be right in logic,—in fact, it would be a misclassification,—if I should cite as at all belonging to the

[1] What follows is the second portion of a little waif of De Quincey's, not reprinted by himself in his Edinburgh Collective Edition, but included in the American Collective Edition, and therefore presumably supplied by him for the purposes of that Edition. The first portion of this waif has been given *ante*, Vol. IV, pp. 286-287, under the title "Pope's Retort upon Addison," in the form of an appended note to De Quincey's biography of Pope written for the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. It had its proper place there, inasmuch as it is an expansion of a passage in the biography itself, discussing the same topic, —viz. the verbal bull or oversight involved in Pope's famous lines in attack of Addison :—

> "Who would not laugh, if such a man there be?
> Who would not weep, if Atticus were he?"

In the American Collective Edition, however, the accident that the whole of the little waif is printed under the title "Pope's Retort upon Addison" disguises the fact that the second portion does not refer to Pope at all, but to Milton. After having commented on the particular bull or oversight committed by Pope in the lines quoted, and so questioned Pope's title to be called a "correct" poet, De Quincey proceeds to inquire whether occasional oversights of the same kind may not be found even in Milton, supremely "correct" though Milton was in general. What follows, being De Quincey's own supposed detection of inaccuracies, or at least of one inaccuracy, in Milton, comes naturally here, just after his refutation of the fault-findings of Addison and Johnson with the same poet. In our reprint we follow the text of the American Edition. There is no indication there of the place of the original appearance of the little article; nor have I been able to settle that point. For some clue, however, see subsequent footnote at p. 417.—M.

same group [of positive literary inaccuracies] several passages in Milton that come very near to Irish bulls by virtue of distorted language. One reason against such a classification would lie precisely in that fact: viz. that the assimilation to the category of bulls lurks in the verbal expression, and not (as in Pope's case) amongst the conditions of the thought. And a second reason would lie in the strange circumstance that Milton had not fallen into this maze of diction through any carelessness or oversight, but with his eyes wide open,—deliberately avowing his error as a special elegance, repeating it, and well aware of splendid Grecian authority for his error if anybody should be bold enough to call it an error. Every reader must be aware of the case—

> "Adam the goodliest man of men since born
> His sons; the fairest of her daughters Eve"—

which makes Adam one of his own sons, Eve one of her own daughters. This, however, is authorized by Grecian usage in the severest writers. Neither can it be alleged that these might be bold poetic expressions, harmonizing with the Grecian idiom; for Poppo has illustrated this singular form of expression in a prose-writer as philosophic and austere as Thucydides,—a form which (as it offends against logic) must offend equally in all languages. Some beauty must have been descried in the idiom, such as atoned for its solecism: for Milton recurs to the same idiom, and under the same entire freedom of choice, elsewhere; particularly in this instance, which has not been pointed out:—"And never," says Satan to the abhorred phantoms of Sin and Death, when crossing his path,

> "And never saw till now
> Sight more detestable than him and thee."

Now, therefore, it seems, he *had* seen a sight more detestable than this very sight. He now looked upon something more hateful than X Y Z. What was it? It was X Y Z.

But the authority of Milton, backed by that of insolent Greece, would prove an overmatch for the logic of centuries. And I withdraw, therefore, from the rash attempt to quarrel with this sort of bull, involving itself in the verbal expres-

sion. But the following, which lies rooted in the mere facts and incidents, is certainly the most extraordinary *practical* bull[1] that all literature can furnish. And a stranger thing, perhaps, than the oversight itself lies in this—that not any critic throughout Europe, two only excepted, but has failed to detect a blunder so memorable. All the rampant audacity of Bentley—"slashing Bentley"—all the jealous malignity of Dr. Johnson, who hated Milton without disguise as a republican, but secretly and under a mask *would* at any rate have hated him from jealousy of his scholarship—had not availed to sharpen these practised and these interested eyes into the detection of an oversight which argues a sudden Lethean forgetfulness on the part of Milton, and in many generations of readers, however alive and awake with malice, a corresponding forgetfulness not less astonishing. Two readers only I have ever heard of that escaped this lethargic inattention: one of which two is myself; and I ascribe my

[1] It is strange, or rather it is *not* strange, considering the feebleness of that lady in such a field, that Miss Edgeworth always fancied herself to have caught Milton in a bull, under circumstances which, whilst leaving the shadow of a bull, effectually disown the substance. "And in the lowest deep a lower deep still opens to devour me." This is the passage denounced by Miss Edgeworth. "If it was already the lowest deep," said the fair lady, "how the deuce [no, perhaps it might be *I* that said '*how the deuce*'] could it open into a lower deep?" Yes, how could it? In carpentry it is clear to my mind that it could *not*. But, in cases of deep imaginative feeling, no phenomenon is more natural than precisely this never-ending growth of one colossal grandeur chasing and surmounting another, or of abysses that swallowed up abysses. Persecutions of this class oftentimes are amongst the symptoms of fever, and amongst the inevitable spontaneities of nature.—Other people I have known who were inclined to class amongst bulls Milton's all-famous expression of "*darkness visible*," whereas it is not even a bold or daring expression; it describes a pure optical experience of very common occurrence. There are two separate darknesses or obscurities: first, that obscurity *by* which you see dimly; and, secondly, that obscurity *which* you see. The first is the atmosphere through which vision is performed, and, therefore, part of the *subjective* conditions essential to the act of seeing. The second is the *object* of your sight. In a glass-house at night illuminated by a sullen fire in one corner, but else dark, you see the darkness massed in the rear as a black object. *That* is the "visible darkness." And, on the other hand, the murky atmosphere between you and the distant rear is not the object, but the medium through or athwart which you descry the black masses. The first

success partly to good luck, but partly to some merit on my own part in having cultivated a habit of systematically accurate reading. If I read at all, I make it a duty to read truly and faithfully. I profess allegiance for the time to the man whom I undertake to study; and I am as loyal to all the engagements involved in such a contract as if I had come under a *sacramentum militare*. So it was that, whilst yet a boy, I came to perceive, with a wonder not yet exhausted, that unaccountable blunder which Milton has committed in the main narrative on which the epic fable of the "Paradise Lost" turns as its hinges. And many a year afterwards I found that Paul Richter, whose vigilance nothing escaped, who carried with him through life "the eye of the hawk and the fire therein," had not failed to make the same discovery.

It is this:—The Archangel Satan has designs upon man, he meditates his ruin; and it is known that he does

darkness is *subjective* darkness,—that is, a darkness in your own eye, and entangled with your very faculty of vision. The second darkness is perfectly different: it is *objective* darkness,—that is to say, not any darkness which affects or modifies your faculty of seeing either for better or worse, but a darkness which is the *object* of your vision, a darkness which you see projected from yourself as a massy volume of blackness, and projected possibly to a vast distance. [See the reference to this topic in De Quincey's first footnote to his paper "The Pagan Oracles," *ante*, Vol. VII, p. 44. "Some five and thirty years "ago," he there says, "I attempted to show that Milton's famous ex- "pression in the 'Paradise Lost,' *No light, but rather darkness visible*, "was not (as critics imagined) a gigantic audacity, but a simple "trait of description, faithful to the literal realities of a phenomenon "(sullen light intermingled with massy darkness) which Milton had "noticed with closer attention than the mob of careless observers." Though the paper on Pagan Oracles appeared first in *Blackwood* for March 1842, this footnote was written for De Quincey's reprint of it in 1858 in the eighth volume of his Collective Edition. Now, as "five and thirty years ago" from 1858 would take us back to 1823, may not that be the date of the missing bit of De Quincey's writings which contained his present morsel of Milton's criticism together with the independent morsel on Pope's Retort upon Addison (see footnote, *ante*, p. 414)? But the *date* does not bring the *place* with it. I have not found the missing morsels either in the *London Magazine*, which was the chief repository of De Quincey's papers between 1821 and 1824, or in *Knight's Quarterly Magazine*, with which he had some little connexion in 1824, the second and last year of its existence. —M.]

Specially to counteract these designs, and for no other purpose whatever, a choir of angelic police is stationed at the gates of Paradise, having (I repeat) one sole commission: viz. to keep watch and ward over the threatened safety of the newly created human pair. Even at the very first this duty is neglected so thoroughly that Satan gains access without challenge or suspicion. That is awful: for, ask yourself, reader, how a constable or an inspector of police would be received who had been stationed at No. 6, on a secret information, and spent the night in making love at No. 15. Through the regular surveillance at the gates Satan passes without objection; and he is first of all detected by a purely accidental collision during the rounds of the junior angels.[1] The result of this collision, and of the examination which follows, is what no reader can ever forget—so unspeakable is the grandeur of that scene between the two hostile Archangels [iv, 874-1015], when the *Fiend* (so named at the moment under the fine machinery used by Milton for exalting or depressing the ideas of his nature) finally takes his flight as an incarnation of darkness.

> "But fled
> Murmuring; and with him fled the shades of night."

The darkness flying with him, naturally we have the feeling that he *is* the darkness, and that all darkness has some essential relation to Satan.

But now, having thus witnessed his terrific expulsion,

[1] It is De Quincey himself that is at fault here. In Milton (*Par. Lost*, iv, 178-183) it is distinctly intimated that Satan's first entry into Paradise was *not* by the regular gate, but by a bound over the enclosing hilly ramparts at a point distant from the gate:—

> "One gate there only was, and that looked east
> On the other side. Which when the arch-felon saw,
> Due entrance he disdained, and, in contempt,
> At one slight bound high overleaped all bound
> Of hill or highest wall, and sheer within
> Lights on his feet."

Consequently, Gabriel and his band of angels on guard at the gate had not seen him, and had to be informed of his advent by Uriel, the sharp-sighted Archangel of the Sun, who had been for some time following his suspicious track earthwards from that luminary, and now hastened after him with the needed message of warning.—M.

naturally we ask what was the sequel. Four books, however, are interposed before we reach the answer to that question. This is the reason that we fail to remark the extraordinary oversight of Milton. Dislocated from its immediate plan in the succession of incidents, that sequel eludes our notice which else and in its natural place would have shocked us beyond measure. The simple abstract of the whole story is that Satan, being ejected, and sternly charged under Almighty menaces not to intrude upon the young Paradise of God, "rides with darkness" for exactly one week, and, having digested his wrath rather than his fears, on the octave of his solemn banishment, without demur, or doubt, or tremor, back he plunges into the very centre of Eden. On a Friday, suppose, he is expelled through the main entrance: on the Friday following he re-enters upon the forbidden premises through a clandestine entrance.[1]

The upshot is that the heavenly police suffer, in the first place, the one sole enemy who was or could be the object of their vigilance to pass without inquest or suspicion,—thus

[1] Better here, again, resort to Milton's own account, instead of De Quincey's. It occurs in Book ix, 63-69 :—

> "The space of seven continued nights he rode
> With darkness—thrice the equinoctial line
> He circled, four times crossed the car of night
> From pole to pole, traversing each colure—
> On the eighth returned, and, on the coast averse
> From entrance or cherubic watch, by stealth
> Found unsuspected way."

What the "unsuspected way" was the poem proceeds to explain :—

> "There was a place
> (Now not, though Sin, not Time, first wrought the change)
> Where Tigris, at the foot of Paradise,
> Into a gulf shot underground, till part
> Rose up a fountain by the Tree of Life.
> In with the river sunk, and with it rose,
> Satan, involved in rising mist; then sought
> Where to lie hid."

As it was midnight at any rate, this second entrance of Satan into Paradise, by a solitary subterranean water-conduit leading from some point in its rugged circumference into the very centre of its interior, might as easily escape the angelic guard at the gate as his first entrance had done.—M.

they *inaugurate* their task ; secondly, by the merest accident (no thanks to their fidelity) they detect him, and with awful adjurations sentence him to perpetual banishment ; but, thirdly, on his immediate return in utter contempt of their sentence, they ignore him altogether, and apparently act upon Dogberry's direction,—that, upon meeting a thief, the police may suspect him to be no true man, and with such manner of men the less they meddle or make the more it will be for their honesty.

DRYDEN'S HEXASTICH ON MILTON[1]

It is a remarkable fact that the very finest epigram in the English language happens also to be the worst. *Epigram* I call it in the austere Greek sense; which thus far resembled our modern idea of an epigram,—that something pointed and allied to wit was demanded in the management of the leading thought at its close, but otherwise nothing tending towards the comic or the ludicrous. The epigram I speak of is the well-known one of Dryden dedicated to the glorification of Milton.[2]

It is irreproachable as regards its severe brevity. Not one word is there that could be spared; nor could the wit of man have cast the movement of the thought into a better mould. There are three couplets. In the first couplet we are reminded of the fact that this earth had, in three different stages of its development, given birth to a trinity of transcendent poets,—meaning narrative poets, or, even more narrowly, epic poets. The duty thrown upon the second couplet is to characterize these three poets, and to value them against each other, but in such terms as that, whilst nothing less than the very highest praise should be assigned to the two elder poets in this trinity—the Greek and the Roman—nevertheless, by some dexterous artifice, a higher praise than the highest should suddenly unmask itself, and drop, as it were, like a diadem from the clouds upon the

[1] Not in any previous collective British edition of De Quincey; but included in the American collective edition, and printed here from that text. Place of original appearance unascertained.—M.

[2] See the words of the epigram, *ante*, p. 299, footnote.—M.

brows of their English competitor. In the kind of expectation raised, and in the extreme difficulty of adequately meeting this expectation, there was pretty much the same challenge offered to Dryden as was offered, somewhere about the same time, to a British ambassador when dining with his political antagonists. One of these — the ambassador of France — had proposed to drink his master, Louis XIV, under the character of the sun, who dispensed life and light to the whole political system. To this there was no objection; and immediately, by way of intercepting any further draughts upon the rest of the solar system, the Dutch ambassador rose, and proposed the health of their high mightinesses the Seven United States, as the moon and six [1] planets, who gave light in the absence of the sun. The two foreign ambassadors, Monsieur and Mynheer, secretly enjoyed the mortification of their English brother, who seemed to be thus left in a state of bankruptcy,—"no funds" being available for retaliation, or so they fancied. But suddenly our British representative toasted *his* master as Joshua, the son of Nun, that made the sun and moon stand still. All had seemed lost for England, when in an instant of time both her antagonists were checkmated.

Dryden assumed something of the same position. He gave away the supreme jewels in his exchequer: apparently nothing remained behind; all was exhausted. To Homer he gave A; to Virgil he gave B; and, behold! after these were given away, there remained nothing at all that would not have been a secondary praise. But, in a moment of time, by giving A *and* B to Milton, at one sling of his victorious arm he raised him above Homer by the whole extent of B, and above Virgil by the whole extent of A. This felicitous evasion of the embarrassment is accomplished in the second couplet; and, finally, the third couplet winds up with graceful effect, by making a *resumé*, or recapitulation of the logic concerned in the distribution of prizes just announced. Nature, he says, had it not in her power to provide a third prize separate from the first and second; her resource was, to join the first and second in combination, —"To make a third, she joined the former two."

[1] "*Six planets*":—No more had then been discovered.

Such is the abstract of this famous epigram ; and, judged simply by the outline and tendency of the thought, it merits all the vast popularity which it has earned. But in the meantime it is radically vicious as regards the filling in of this outline ; for the particular quality in which Homer is accredited with the pre-eminence, viz. *loftiness of thought*, happens to be a mere variety of expression for that quality, viz. *majesty*, in which the pre-eminence is awarded to Virgil. Homer excels Virgil in the very point in which lies Virgil's superiority to Homer ; and that synthesis by means of which a great triumph is reserved to Milton becomes obviously impossible, when it is perceived that the supposed analytic elements of this synthesis are blank reiterations of each other.

Exceedingly striking it is that a thought should have prospered for one hundred and seventy years which, on the slightest steadiness of examination, turns out to be no thought at all, but mere blank vacuity. There is, however, this justification of the case,—that the mould, the set of channels, into which the metal of the thought is meant to run, really *has* the felicity which it appears to have : the form is perfect ; and it is merely in the *matter*, in the accidental filling up of the mould, that a fault has been committed. Had the Virgilian point of excellence been *loveliness* instead of *majesty*, or any word whatever suggesting the common antithesis of sublimity and beauty,—or had it been power on the one side, matched against grace on the other, — the true lurking tendency of the thought would have been developed, and the sub-conscious purpose of the epigram would have fulfilled itself to the letter.

N.B.—It is not meant that *loftiness of thought* and *majesty* are expressions so entirely interchangeable as that no shades of difference could be suggested ; it is enough that these "shades" are not substantial enough, or broad enough, to support the weight of opposition which the epigram assigns to them. *Grace* and *elegance*, for instance, are far from being in all relations synonymous ; but they are so to the full extent of any purposes concerned in this epigram. Nevertheless, it is probable enough that Dryden had moving in his

thoughts a relation of the word *majesty* which, if developed, would have done justice to his meaning. It was, perhaps, the decorum and sustained dignity of the *composition*—the workmanship apart from the native grandeur of the materials —the majestic style of the artistic treatment as distinguished from the original creative power—which Dryden, the translator of the Roman poet, familiar therefore with his weakness and with his strength, meant in this place to predicate as characteristically observable in Virgil.

NOTES FROM THE POCKET-BOOK OF A LATE OPIUM-EATER

[Among De Quincey's contributions to the *London Magazine*, after his "Confessions" had established him as one of the most welcome contributors to that periodical, was, as we have had occasion once or twice to mention already, a series of odds and ends continued from number to number under the title "Notes from the Pocket-Book of a late Opium-Eater," with the signature "X. Y. Z." The series began in September 1823, and straggled through five subsequent numbers of the magazine, ending in December 1824. Altogether, in the six instalments of the series there were sixteen separate short articles,—some of them nuggets of a single paragraph only,—each with its own sub-title. When De Quincey was at work on the Edinburgh Collective Edition of his Writings, he availed himself of this deposit of small miscellanies lying in the old numbers of the *London Magazine*, and detached several of the more important of them for republication as independent articles in the Collective Edition. "Walking Stewart," "On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth," and "Falsification of English History," were thus detached by him for independent reprint; and these, accordingly, have their places as independent articles in the present edition:—*ante*, Vol. III, pp. 103-120; Vol. X, pp. 389-394; and Vol. IX, pp. 295-312. On the same principle, and the series having been thus at all events broken up by De Quincey himself, two of the other items in it,—to wit, "Malthus on Population," and "On Suicide,"—have also been inserted in the present edition as independent articles in the places to which they belong by the nature of their matter: see *ante*, Vol. IX, pp. 11-19, and Vol. VIII, pp. 398-403. Eleven of the original sixteen *Notes from the Pocket-Book*, therefore, remain to be disposed of; and, as it would be a pity to break up the original series farther by scattering them (as has been done in the American Edition), they are inserted here collectively under their common original title,—the rather because most of them are distinctly pieces of literary criticism, and would have to come at any rate into the present volume or the next. Three similar morsels, which were really "Notes from the Pocket-Book," though they

appeared in the columns of the *London Magazine* before De Quincey had bethought himself of that convenient title for the whole series of such casual nuggets, are added to the reserved eleven, increasing the number to fourteen in all. These are printed in the exact order of their appearance in the magazine; which was as follows:—*Anglo-German Dictionaries*, April 1823 (no signature, but vouched for as De Quincey's in Bohn's Lowndes on the authority of Messrs. Taylor and Hessey, the proprietors of the magazine); *Prefigurations of Remote Events*, in same number (signed Z, and also vouched for); *Moral Effects of Revolutions*, May 1823 (signed Z, and also vouched for); *English Dictionaries, Reformadoes, Proverbs, Antagonism, To the Lakers*, all in November 1823; *False Distinctions, Madness*, and *English Physiology*, all in June 1824; *Superficial Knowledge, Manuscripts of Melmoth*, and *Scriptural Allusion explained*, all in July 1824.—The last eleven were reprinted in 1871 in the sixteenth volume of Messrs. Black's revised issue of the Collective Edition; the first three are now added from the old columns of the *London Magazine*.—M.]

ANGLO-GERMAN DICTIONARIES

The German dictionaries compiled for the use of Englishmen studying that language are all bad enough, I doubt not, even in this year 1823; but those of a century back are the most ludicrous books that ever mortal read: *read*, I say, for they are well worth reading, being often as good as a jest-book. In some instances, I am convinced that the compilers (Germans living in Germany) had a downright hoax put upon them by some facetious Briton whom they had consulted; what is given as the English equivalent for the German word being not seldom a pure coinage that never had any existence out of Germany. Other instances there are in which the words, though not of foreign manufacture, are almost as useless to the English student as if they were: slang-words, I mean, from the slang vocabulary current about the latter end of the seventeenth century. These must have been laboriously culled from the works of Tom Brown, Sir Roger L'Estrange, Echard, Jeremy Collier, and others, from 1660 to 1700, who were the great masters of this *vernacular* English (as it might emphatically be called with a reference to the primary[1] meaning of the word *vernacular*); and I

[1] What I mean is this:—Vernacular (from *verna*, a slave born in his master's house):—1. The homely idiomatic language in opposition

believe that, if any part of this slang has become, or ever should become, a dead language to the English critic, his best guide to the recovery of its true meaning will be the German dictionaries of Bailey, Arnold, &c., in their earliest editions. By one of these, the word *Potztausend* (a common German oath) is translated, to the best of my remembrance, thus :— "Udzooks, Udswiggers, Udswoggers, Bublikins, Boblikins, Splitterkins," &c. ; and so on, with a large choice of other elegant varieties. Here, I take it, our friend the hoaxer had been at work ; but the drollest example I have met with of their slang is in the following story told to me by Mr. Coleridge. About the year 1794, a German, recently imported into Bristol, had happened to hear of Mrs. X., a wealthy widow. He thought it would be a good speculation to offer himself to the lady's notice as well qualified to "succeed" to the late Mr. X., and accordingly waited on the lady with that intention. Having no great familiarity with English, he provided himself with a copy of one of the dictionaries I have mentioned ; and, on being announced to the lady, he determined to open his proposal with this introductory sentence — "Madam, having heard that Mr. X., late your husband, is dead" : but, coming to the last word "gestorben" (dead), he was at a loss for the English equivalent ; so, hastily pulling out his dictionary (a huge 8vo), he turned to the word "sterben" (to die), and there found ———. But what he found will be best collected from the dialogue which followed, as reported by the lady :—

German. Madam, hahfing heard that Mein Herr X., late your man, is ——(these words he kept chiming over as if to himself, until he arrived at No. 1 of the interpretations of "sterben," when he roared out, in high glee at his discovery)——is, dat is—has, *kicked de bucket.*

Widow. (With astonishment).—"Kicked the bucket," Sir !—what—

German. Ah ! mein Gott !—Alway Ich make mistake :

to any mixed jargon, or lingua franca, spoken by an imported slave. 2. Hence, generally, the pure mother-tongue as opposed to the same tongue corrupted by false refinement. By vernacular English, therefore, in the primary sense, I mean such homely English as is banished from books and polite conversation to Billingsgate and Wapping.

I vou'd have said—(beginning again with the same solemnity of tone)—since dat Mein Herr X., late your man, hav—— *hopped de twig*—(which words he screamed out with delight, certain that he had now hit the nail upon the head).

Widow. Upon my word, Sir, I am at a loss to understand you: "Kicked the bucket," and "hopped the twig!"——

German. (Perspiring with panic.) Ah, Madam! von—two—tree—ten tousand pardon: vat sad, wicket dictionary I haaf, dat alway bring me in trouble: but now you shall hear—(and then, recomposing himself solemnly for a third effort, he began as before)—Madam, since I did hear, or wash hearing, dat Mein Herr X., late your man, haaf—(with a triumphant shout)—haaf, I say, *gone to Davy's locker*——

Further he would have gone; but the widow could stand no more: this nautical phrase, familiar to the streets of Bristol, allowed her no longer to misunderstand his meaning; and she quitted the room in a tumult of laughter, sending a servant to show her unfortunate suitor out of the house, with his false friend the dictionary; whose help he might, perhaps, invoke for the last time, on making his exit, in the curses—"Udswoggers, Boblikins, Bublikins, Splitterkins!" [De Quincey repeats this story: see *ante*, Vol. V, pp. 200-201.—M.]

N.B.—As test words for trying a *modern* German dictionary, I will advise the student to look for the words—*Beschwichtigen, Kulisse*, and *Mansarde*. The last is originally French, but the first is a true German word, and, on a question arising about its etymology at the house of a gentleman in Edinburgh, could not be found in any one out of five or six modern Anglo-German dictionaries.

PREFIGURATIONS OF REMOTE EVENTS

With a total disbelief in all the vulgar legends of supernatural agency, and *that* upon firmer principles than I fear most people could assign for their incredulity, I must yet believe that the "soul of the world" has in some instances sent forth mysterious types of the cardinal events in the great historic drama of our planet. One has been noticed by

a German author, and it is placed beyond the limits of any rational scepticism: I mean the coincidence between the augury derived from the flight of the twelve vultures as types of the duration of the Roman Empire—*i.e.* Western Empire—for twelve centuries, and the actual event. This augury we know to have been recorded many centuries before its consummation; so that no juggling or collusion between the prophets and the witnesses to the final event can be suspected. Some others might be added. At present I shall notice a coincidence from our own history, which, though not so important as to come within the class of prefigurations I have been alluding to, is yet curious enough to deserve mention. The oak of Boscobel and its history are matter of household knowledge. It is not equally well known that in a medal struck to commemorate the installation (about 1636) of Charles II, then Prince of Wales, as a Knight of the Garter, amongst the decorations was introduced an oak-tree with the legend "Seris factura nepotibus umbram."

MORAL EFFECTS OF REVOLUTIONS

In revolutionary times, as where a civil war prevails in a country, men are much worse, as moral beings, than in quiet and untroubled states of peace. So much is matter of history. The English under Charles II, after twenty years' agitation and civil tumults; the Romans after Sylla and Marius and the still more bloody proscriptions of the triumvirates; the French, after the wars of the league and the storms of the revolution,—were much changed for the worse, and exhibited strange relaxations of the moral principle. But why? What is the philosophy of the case? Some will think it sufficiently explained by the necessity of witnessing so much bloodshed—the hearths and the very graves of their fathers polluted by the slaughter of their countrymen—the "acharnement" which characterises civil contests (as always the quarrels of friends are the fiercest)—and the licence of wrong which is bred by war and the majesties of armies. Doubtless this is part of the explanation. But is this all? Mr. Coleridge has referred to this

subject in "The Friend," but, to the best of my remembrance, only noticing it as a fact. Fichte, the celebrated German philosopher, has given us his view of it ("Idea of War," p. 15); and it is so ingenious that it deserves mention. It is this:—"Times of revolution force men's minds inwards: hence they are led amongst other things to meditate on morals with reference to their own conduct. But to subtilize too much upon this subject must always be ruinous to morality with all understandings that are not very powerful,—*i.e.* with the majority,—because it terminates naturally in a body of maxims, a specious and covert self-interest. Whereas, when men meditate less, they are apt to act more from natural feeling, in which the natural goodness of the heart often interferes to neutralize or even to overbalance its errors."

ENGLISH DICTIONARIES

It has already, I believe, been said more than once in print that one condition of a good dictionary would be to exhibit the *history* of each word,—that is, to record the exact succession of its meanings. But the philosophic reason for this has not been given; which reason, by the way, settles a question often agitated, viz. whether the true meaning of a word be best ascertained from its etymology, or from its present use and acceptation. Mr. Coleridge says, "The best explanation of a word is often that which is suggested by its derivation" (I give the substance of his words from memory). Others allege that we have nothing to do with the primitive meaning of the word; that the question is—what does it mean now? and they appeal, as the sole authority they acknowledge, to the received—

"Usus, penes quem est jus et norma loquendi."

In what degree each party is right may be judged from this consideration—that no word can ever deviate from its first meaning *per saltum*: each successive stage of meaning must always have been determined by that which preceded. And on this one law depends the whole philosophy of the case;

for it thus appears that the original and primitive sense of the word will contain virtually all which can ever afterwards arise: as in the *evolution*-theory of generation the whole series of births is represented as involved in the first parent. Now, if the evolution of successive meanings has gone on rightly, *i.e.* by simply lapsing through a series of close affinities, there can be no reason for recurring to the primitive meaning of the word; but, if it can be shown that the evolution has been faulty, *i.e.* that the chain of true affinities has ever been broken through ignorance, then we have a right to reform the word, and to appeal from the usage ill-instructed to a usage better-instructed. Whether we ought to exercise this right will depend on a consideration which I will afterwards notice. Meantime I will give a few instances of faulty evolution.

1. *Implicit.* This word is now used in a most ignorant way; and from its misuse it has come to be a word wholly useless: for it is now never coupled, I think, with any other substantive than these two—faith and confidence: a poor domain indeed to have sunk to from its original wide range of territory. Moreover, when we say *implicit faith* or *implicit confidence*, we do not thereby indicate any specific *kind* of faith and confidence differing from other faith or other confidence: but it is a vague rhetorical word which expresses a great *degree* of faith and confidence; a faith that is unquestioning, a confidence that is unlimited; *i.e.* in fact, a faith that *is* a faith, a confidence that *is* a confidence. Such a use of the word ought to be abandoned to women. Doubtless, when sitting in a bower in the month of May, it is pleasant to hear from a lovely mouth—"I put implicit confidence in your honour": but, though pretty and becoming to such a mouth, it is very unfitting to the mouth of a scholar; and I will be bold to affirm that no man who had ever acquired a scholar's knowledge of the English language has used the word in that lax and unmeaning way. The history of the word is this:—*Implicit* (from the Latin *implicitus*, involved in, folded up) was always used originally, and still is so by scholars, as the direct antithete of *explicit* (from the Latin *explicitus*, evolved, unfolded); and the use of both may be thus illustrated:—

Q. "Did Mr. A ever say that he would marry Miss B?" —*A.* "No; not explicitly (*i.e.* in so many words); but he did implicitly: by showing great displeasure if she received attentions from any other man; by asking her repeatedly to select furniture for his house; by consulting her on his own plans of life."

Q. "Did Epicurus maintain any doctrines such as are here ascribed to him?"—*A.* "Perhaps not explicitly, either in words or by any other mode of direct sanction: on the contrary, I believe he denied them, and disclaimed them with vehemence: but he maintained them implicitly; for they are involved in other acknowledged doctrines of his, and may be deduced from them by the fairest and most irresistible logic."

Q. "Why did you complain of the man? Had he expressed any contempt for your opinion?"—*A.* "Yes, he had: not explicit contempt, I admit; for he never opened his stupid mouth; but implicitly he expressed the utmost that he could: for, when I had spoken two hours against the old newspaper, and in favour of the new one, he went instantly and put his name down as a subscriber to the old one."

Q. "Did Mr. —— approve of that gentleman's conduct and way of life?"—*A.* "I don't know that I ever heard him speak about it; but he seemed to give it his implicit approbation by allowing both his sons to associate with him when the complaints ran highest against him."

These instances may serve to illustrate the original use of the word: which use has been retained from the sixteenth century down to our own days by an uninterrupted chain of writers. In the eighteenth century this use was indeed nearly effaced; but still in the first half of that century it was retained by Saunderson, the Cambridge professor of mathematics (see his Algebra, &c.),[1] with three or four others, and in the latter half by a man to whom Saunderson had some resemblance in spring and elasticity of understanding—viz. by Edmund Burke. Since his day I know of no writers who have avoided the slang and unmeaning use of the word, excepting Messrs. Coleridge and Wordsworth; both of whom (but especially the last) have been remarkably attentive to

[1] Nicholas Saunderson, 1682-1739.—M.

the scholarlike [1] use of words, and to the history of their own language.

Thus much for the primitive use of the word *implicit*. Now with regard to the history of its transition into its present use. It is briefly this; and it will appear at once that it has arisen through ignorance. When it was objected to a papist that his Church exacted an assent to a great body of traditions and doctrines to which it was impossible that the great majority could be qualified, either as respected time, or knowledge, or culture of the understanding, to give any reasonable assent, the answer was:—"Yes; but that sort of assent is not required of a poor uneducated man; all that he has to do is to believe in the Church,—he is to have faith in *her* faith: by that act he adopts for his own whatsoever the Church believes, though he may never have heard of it even: his faith is implicit,—*i.e.* involved and wrapped up in the faith of the Church,—which faith he firmly believes to be the true faith upon the conviction he has that the Church is preserved from all possibility of erring by the Spirit of God." [2] Now, as this sort of believing by proxy or implicit belief (in which the belief was not *immediate* in the thing proposed to the belief, but in the authority of another person who believed in that thing, and thus *mediately* in the thing itself) was constantly attacked by the learned assailants of Popery, it naturally happened that many unlearned readers of these Protestant polemics caught at a phrase which was so much

[1] Among the most shocking of the unscholarlike barbarisms now prevalent, I must notice the use of the word "*nice*" in an objective instead of a subjective sense. "*Nice*" does not and cannot express a quality of the object, but merely a quality of the subject: yet we hear daily of "a very nice letter," "a nice young lady," &c.—meaning a letter or a young lady that it is pleasant to contemplate: but a nice young lady means a fastidious young lady; and "a nice letter" ought to mean a letter that is very delicate in its rating and in the choice of its company.

[2] Thus Milton, who (in common with his contemporaries) always uses the word accurately, speaks of Ezekiel "swallowing his implicit roll of knowledge"—*i.e.* coming to the knowledge of many truths not separately and in detail, but by the act of arriving at some one master truth which involved all the rest. So again, if any man or government were to suppress a book, that man or government might justly be reproached as the implicit destroyer of all the wisdom and virtue that might have been the remote products of that book.

bandied between the two parties: the spirit of the context sufficiently explained to them that it was used by Protestants as a term of reproach and indicated a faith that was an erroneous faith by being too easy, too submissive, and too passive; but the particular mode of this erroneousness they seldom came to understand, as learned writers naturally employed the term without explanation, presuming it to be known to those whom they addressed. Hence these ignorant readers caught at the last *result* of the phrase "implicit faith" rightly, truly supposing it to imply a resigned and unquestioning faith; but they missed the whole intermediate cause of meaning by which only the word "implicit" could ever have been entitled to express that result.

I have allowed myself to say so much on this word "implicit" because the history of the mode by which its true meaning was lost applies almost to all other corrupted words—*mutatis mutandis*; and the amount of it may be collected into this formula,—that the *result* of the word is apprehended and retained, but the *schematismus* by which that result was ever reached is lost. This is the brief theory of all corruption of words. The word *schematismus* I have unwillingly used, because no other expresses my meaning. So great and extensive a doctrine however lurks in this word that I defer the explanation of it to a separate article. Meantime a passable sense of the word will occur to everybody who reads Greek. I now go on to a few more instances of words that have forfeited their original meaning through the ignorance of those who used them.

Punctual. This word is now confined to the meagre denoting of accuracy in respect to time—fidelity to the precise moment of an appointment. But originally it was just as often, and just as reasonably, applied to space as to time; "I cannot punctually determine the origin of the Danube; but I know in general the district in which it rises, and that its fountain is near that of the Rhine." Not only, however, was it applied to time and space, but it had a large and very elegant figurative use. Thus in the *History of the Royal Society* by Sprat (an author who was finical and nice in his use of words) I remember a sentence to this effect: "The Society gave punctual directions for the conducting of

experiments," — *i.e.* directions which descended to the minutiæ and lowest details. Again, in the once popular romance of *Parismus*, Prince of Bohemia—"She" (I forget who) "made a punctual relation of the whole matter,"—*i.e.* a relation which was perfectly circumstantial and true to the minutest features of the case.

But, that I may not weary my reader, I shall here break off, and shortly return to this subject.

REFORMADOES

Amongst the numerous instances of ignorance in Mrs. Macaulay (or Macaulay Graham, as I believe she was latterly), scattered up and down her History,[1] is this (and by ignorance I mean ignorance of what belonged to the subject she had undertaken to treat, and ignorance which it was impossible she could have displayed if she had read the quarter of what she professed to have read, or the tenth part of what she ought to have read):—Quoting some passage about the numerous officers who had accumulated in London from the broken regiments and under the self-denying ordinance, who are all classed under the head of Reformadoes, she declares that she does not understand the meaning of that term! Dr. Johnson hated her, of course, as a republican; and, as we all know from Boswell, contrived an occasion for insulting her. He might have confounded her still more by asking her, as she professed to have read Andrew Marvell, in what sense she explained that passage in one of the many admirable speeches and songs which he has put into the mouth of Charles II, where his Majesty tells the House of Commons that they must provide him sufficient funds, not only for such ladies as he had upon present "duty," but also for the whole staff of his "reformado concubines"

[1] Mrs. Catherine Macaulay, 1733-1791, author of a *History of England from the Accession of James I. to the Elevation of the House of Hanover*, published in 1763-83 in eight volumes. There are mentions of her in Boswell's *Johnson*.—M.

PROVERBS

As the "wisdom of nations," and the quintessential abstract of innumerable minds, proverbs must naturally be true; but how? In what sense true? Not ἁπλως, not absolutely and unconditionally, but in relation to that position from which they are taken. Most proverbs are hemispheres as it were; and they imply another hemisphere with an opposite pole; and the two proverbs jointly compose a sphere—*i.e.* the entire truth. Thus, one proverb says—"Fortune favours fools": but this is met by its anti-proverb—"Sapiens dominabitur astris." Each is true, as long as the other co-exists; each becomes false, if taken exclusively.

The illustration, by the way, is not the best I might have chosen with a little more time for consideration; but the principle here advanced of truths being in many cases no truths unless taken with their complements (to use a trigonometrical term), and until they are rounded into a perfect figure by an opposite hemisphere,—this principle, I shall endeavour to show a little further on, is a most important one, and of very large application.

ANTAGONISM

In this article I mean to apply the principle of antagonism, as it is manifested in the fine arts, to the solution of a particular difficulty in Milton, and in that way to draw the attention of the reader to a great cardinal law on which philosophical criticism, whenever it arises, must hereafter mainly depend. I presume that my reader is acquainted with the meaning of the word antagonism as it is understood in the term "antagonist muscle," or in general from the term "antagonist force."

It has been objected to Milton that he is guilty of pedantry in the introduction of scientific and technical terms into the Paradise Lost; and the words frieze, architrave, pilaster, and other architectural terms, together with

terms from astronomy, navigation, &c., have been cited as instances of this pedantry. This criticism I pronounce to be founded on utter psychological ignorance and narrow thinking. And I shall endeavour to justify Milton by placing in a clear light the subtle principle by which he was influenced in that practice: which principle I do not mean to say that Milton had fully developed to his own consciousness; for it was not the habit of his age or of his mind to exercise any analytic subtlety of mind; but I say that the principle was immanent in his feelings; just as his fine ear contained implicitly all the metrical rules which are latent in his exquisite versification, though it is most improbable that he ever took the trouble to evolve those to his own distinct consciousness. [See *ante*, pp. 402-404.—M.]

TO THE LAKERS

THOSE who visit the Lakes, *not* those who reside amongst them, according to a recent use of the word, are called by the country people of that district *Lakers*; in which word there is a pleasant ambiguity and a lurking satire. For the word *lake* (from the old Gothic, *laikan*, ludere) is universally applied to children playing; and the simple people who till the soil of Westmoreland and Cumberland cannot view in any other light than that of childish laking the migrating propensities of all the great people of the south, who annually come up like shoals of herrings from their own fertile pastures to the rocky grounds of the north. All the wits and *beaux esprits* of London, senators, captains, lawyers, "lords, ladies, councillors, their choice nobility," flock up from Midsummer to Michaelmas, and rush violently through the Lake District, as if their chief purpose in coming were to rush back again like the shifting of a monsoon. They commit many other absurdities, which have furnished me with matter for a pleasant paper upon them—"pleasant," as in the farce of *Taste* Foote says "pleasant, but wrong"; for it is too satirical; and I doubt whether I shall publish it. Meantime, that the poor people may not be driven to distrac-

tion by being ridiculed for errors which they know not how to amend, Mr. Coleridge, Mr. Wordsworth, Professor W——,[1] and myself, with some ten or twelve others, have had a meeting, at which we have agreed to club our several quotas of wit and learning for the production of a new Guide to the Lakes. Considering what sort of cattle our competitors are, it can be no honour to us, I presume, that our work will put an extinguisher on all which have preceded it: it will not be so proper to call it *a* Guide to the Lakes as *the* Guide,—not the latest and best of Guides (as if there were any other worthy of the name), but the first and the only Guide. As to the parts assigned to us severally, they are not entirely cast. Most of us were tolerably bouzy at our first meeting; and not much business was done: only I remember that Mr. Coleridge wished to do the metaphysics; but I disallowed of *that*, and swore I would "strike" (in the journeyman's sense) if it were given to anybody but myself. So he does the politics; and I believe the mineralogy was assigned to Mr. W——[2]; at least Professor W—— tells me that he has since observed him in a solitary place "smiting the rocks with a pocket-hammer,"—which I know not how he will reconcile with a passage in the Excursion rather hard upon that practice. We shall be happy to make honourable mention in verse or prose of all persons who will furnish us with embellishments for our work, plates, vignettes, &c., but of course done in a style as much superior to the wretched illustrations which accompany other Guides as our work will be superior to theirs.[3]

As this Guide will take some time in preparing, and the lake-season is now at its meridian, I shall mention in this place, for the information of the great numbers who wish to ascend Helvellyn, but do not feel themselves equal to the exertion of walking up, that it has been ascertained within these two or three years that it is possible to ride up on a sure-footed horse. By the way, there is something to repay

[1] Professor Wilson.—M.

[2] Probably Mr. James Wilson, the naturalist, brother of Professor Wilson.—M.

[3] The perfected edition of Wordsworth's own Guide to the Lakes appeared in 1835.—M.

one for the labour of ascending Helvellyn ; for it stands in the *centre* of the Lake District, and the swelling and heaving of the billowy scene of mountains around it and below it is truly magnificent. But Skiddaw is one of the outposts of the country ; and nothing that I know of is to be gained by ascending it, except perhaps a sprained ankle,—or, as a man would be apt to infer from Mrs. Ratcliffe's alarming account of that ascent, a broken neck. The purpose, however, for which most people ascend Skiddaw, and for which they leave their beds in Keswick at midnight, is to see the sun rise ; which is the most absurd of all purposes. To see the sun rise *amongst* mountains is doubtless a fine thing ; but this is best accomplished, so as to see the oblique gleams and the "long levelled rules" of light which are shot through the different vistas and loopholes of the hills, by standing below and near their base. Going up a three-hours' ascent to the top of a mountain in order to view an appearance in the heavens rests on the same mistake which has induced —— to plant an astronomical observatory on the top of a hill at a great increase of expense, and is like standing on a pin-cushion or in pattens to see the ascent of a balloon. If a hill had stood in the way of the observatory, and directly obstructed its view, it might be well to carry it to a little distance, or, if that were not possible, to place it on the hill. Immediate obstructions cleared, the observatory will command as ample an area of sky from the plains as from the hills. And so of picturesque views. For my part, I cannot but approve the judgment of three Englishmen travelling on the Continent, who, having ascended a hill to see the sun rise, were so disappointed that they unanimously hissed him, and cried "Off ! off !" as to a bad performer.

FALSE DISTINCTIONS

The petty distinctions current in conversation and criticism are all false when they happen to regard intellectual objects ; and there is no mode of error which is so disgusting to a man who has descended an inch below the surface of things :

for their evil is—first, That they become so many fetters to the mind, and, secondly, That they give the appearance of ambitious paradoxes to any juster distinctions substituted in their places. More error is collected in the form of popular distinctions than in any other shape; and, as they are always *assumed* (from their universal currency) without the mind's ever being summoned to review them, they present incalculable hindrances to its advance in every direction. What a world of delusion, for example, lies in the hollow distinction of *Reason* and *Imagination*. I protest that I feel a sense of shame for the human intellect, and sit uneasily in my chair, when I hear a man summing up his critique upon a book by saying that "in short, it is addressed to the imagination and not to the reason." Yet upon this meagre and vague opposition are built many other errors as gross as itself. I will notice three:—

1. *That women have more imagination than men.*

This monstrous assertion, which is made in contempt of all literature, not only comes forward as a capital element in all attempts[1] to characterise the female sex as contradistinguished from the male, but generally forms the *theme* on which all the rest is but a descant. A friend, to whom I was noticing this, suggested that by *Imagination* in this place was meant simply the *Fancy* in its lighter and more delicate movements. But even this will not cure the proposition: so restricted even, it is a proposition which sets all experience at defiance. For, not to be so hard upon the female sex as to ask—Where is their *Paradise Lost*? where is their *Lear* and *Othello*?—I will content myself with asking where is the female *Hudibras*, or the female *Dunciad*? Or, to descend from works of so masculine a build to others of more delicate proportions, where is the female *Rape of the Lock*? Or, to adapt the question to the French literature, where is the female *Ver-Vert*?[2] And the same questions

[1] See, for instance, those which occur in the works of Mrs. Hannah More—a woman of great talents, and for whom I feel the greatest respect personally, having long had the pleasure of her acquaintance. Her conversation is brilliant and instructive; but this has nothing to do with her philosophy.

[2] This little work of Gresset's occupies the same station in the French literature that the *Rape of the Lock* does in ours. For playful

may be put, *mutatis mutandis*, upon all other literatures past or current. Men are shy of pressing too hard upon women. However much our sisters may be in the wrong (and they generally are in the wrong) in their disputes with us, they always take the benefit of sex—which is a stronger privilege than benefit of clergy. But, supposing them to waive *that* for a moment, and imagining this case—that the two sexes were to agree to part and to "pack up their alls," and each sex to hoist on its back its *valuable* contributions to literature,—then I shall be so ungallant as to affirm that the burthens would be pretty well adapted to the respective shoulders and physical powers which were to bear them; and for no department of literature would this hold more certainly true than for the imaginative and the fanciful part. In mathematics there exist works composed by women to reprieve which from destruction men would be glad to pay something or other (let us not ask too curiously *how* much); but what poem is there in any language (always excepting those of our own day) which any man would give a trifle to save? Would he give a shilling? If he would, I should suspect the shilling exceedingly, and would advise a rigorous inquiry into its character. I set aside Sappho and a few other female lyric poets; for we have not sufficient samples

wit, it is the jewel of the French *Poésies Légéres*. Its inferiority to the *Rape of the Lock*, however, both in plan and in brilliancy of execution, is very striking, and well expresses the general *ratio* of the French literature to ours. If in any department, common prejudice would have led us in this to anticipate a superiority on the part of the French. Yet their inferiority is hardly anywhere more conspicuous. —By the way, it is very remarkable that the late Mr. Scott, who had expressly studied the French Literature, should have had so little acquaintance with a writer of Gresset's eminence as is argued by the fact of his having admitted into the *London Magazine* [see *ante*, Vol. III, pp. 127-8.—M.] a mere prose abstract of the *Ver-Vert*, without any reference to the French original. This is the more remarkable because there existed already in the English language a metrical version of the *Ver-Vert* (a bad one, I dare say), which is reprinted in so notorious a book as Chalmers's *Poets*. The prose abstract is not ill executed, according to my remembrance; but still an *abridgment* of a jeu d'esprit in all parts elaborately burnished is of itself an absurdity. To strip it of verse is no advantage; and to omit the recommendation of a celebrated name seems to argue that it was unknown. [J. B. Gresset, French poet and dramatist, born 1709, died 1777.—M.]

of their poetry: and for modern literature I set aside the writers of short poems that take no sweep and compass, such as Lady Winchelsea,[1] Madame Deshouliéres,[2] &c. &c. But I ask, with respect to poems solemnly planned,—such as keep the poet on the wing and oblige him to sustain his flight for a reasonable space and variety of course,—where is there one of any great excellence which owes its existence to a woman? I ask of any man who suffers his understanding to slumber so deeply and to benefit so little by his experience as to allow credit to the doctrine that women have the advantage of men in imagination,—I ask him this startling question, which must surely make him leap up from his dream: What work of imagination owing its birth to a woman can he lay his hand on (I am a reasonable man, and do not ask for a hundred or a score, but will be content with one) which has exerted any memorable influence, such as History would notice, upon the mind of man? Who is the female Æschylus, or Euripides, or Aristophanes? Where is the female rival of Chaucer, of Cervantes, of Calderon? Where is *Mrs.* Shakspere?——No, no! good women: it is sufficient honour for you that you produce *us*—the men of this planet—who produce the books (the good ones, I mean). In some sense therefore you are grandmothers to all the intellectual excellence that does or will exist: and let *that* content you. As to poetry in its *highest* form, I never yet knew a woman—nor will believe that any has existed—who could rise to an entire sympathy with what is most excellent in that art. High abstractions, to which poetry κατ' ἐξοχην is always tending, are utterly inapprehensible by the female mind; the concrete and the individual, fleshed in action and circumstance, are all that they can reach: the το καθ' ὁλου—the ideal—is above them. Saying this, however, I mean no disrespect to female pretensions: even intellectually they have their peculiar and separate advantages, though no balance to ours. They have *readier* wits than men, because they are more easily impressed and excited; and, for *moral* greatness and magnanimity, under the sharpest trials of danger, pain, adversity, or temptation, there is nothing so

[1] Anne, Countess of Winchelsea, English poetess, died 1720.
[2] Antoinette Deshouliéres, French poetess, died 1694.

great that I cannot believe of women. This world has produced nothing more heroic and truly noble than Mrs. Hutchison of Nottingham Castle and Madame Roland : and we may be assured that there are many Hutchisons and many Rolands at all times *in posse*, that would show themselves such if ordinary life supplied occasions. For their sakes I would be happy to tell or to believe any reasonable lie in behalf of their sex ; but I cannot and will not lie, or believe a lie, in the face of all history and experience.

2. *That the savage has more imagination than the civilised man :*

3. *That Oriental nations have more imagination (and, according to some, a more passionate constitution of mind) than those of Europe.*

As to savages, their poetry and their eloquence are always of the most unimaginative order : when they are figurative, they are so by mere necessity ; language being too poor amongst savage nations to express any but the rudest thoughts, so that such feelings as are not of hourly recurrence can be expressed only by figures. Moreover, it is a mistake to suppose that merely to deal in figurative language implies any imaginative power ; it is one of the commonest expressions of the over-excitement of weakness ; for there are spasms of weakness no less than spasms of strength. In all the specimens of savage eloquence which have been reported to us there is every mark of an infantine understanding : the thoughts are of the poorest order, and, what is particularly observable, are mere fixtures in the brain,—having no vital principle by which they become generative or attractive of other thoughts. A Demosthenical fervour of *manner* they sometimes have ; which arises from the predominance of interrogation, the suppression of the logical connexions, the nakedness of their mode of *schematising* the thoughts, and the consequent rapidity with which the different parts of the harangue succeed to each other. But these characteristics of manner, which in the Athenian were the result of exquisite artifice, in them are the mere *negative* product of their intellectual barrenness. The Athenian *forewent* the full development of the logical connexion ; the savage *misses* it, from the unpractised state of his reasoning faculties. The Athenian

was naked from choice and for effect; the savage from poverty. And, be the *manner* what it may, the *matter* of a savage oration is always despicable.

But, if savages betray the *negation* of all imaginative power (= 0), the Oriental nations betray the *negative* of that power (= − imagination). In the Koran I read that the pen with which God writes is made of mother-of-pearl, and is so long that an Arabian courser of the finest breed would not be able to gallop from one end to the other in a space of 500 years. Upon this it would be said in the usual style of English criticism—"Yes; no doubt, it is very extravagant: the writer's imagination runs away with his judgment." Imagination! How so? The imagination seeks the illimitable; dissolves the definite; translates the finite into the infinite. But this Arabian image has, on the contrary, translated the infinite into the finite. And so it is generally with Oriental imagery.

In all this there is something more than mere error of fact, something worse than mere error of theory; for it is thus implied that the understanding and the imaginative faculty exist in insulation—neither borrowing nor lending; that they are strong at the expense of each other; &c. &c. And from these errors of theory arise practical errors of the worst consequence. One of the profoundest is that which concerns the discipline of the reasoning faculties. All men are anxious, if it were only for display in conversation, to "reason" (as they call it) well. But how mighty is the error which many make about the constituents of that power! That the fancy has anything to do with it is the last thought that would occur to them. Logic, say they, delivers the art of reasoning; and logic has surely no commerce with the fancy. Be it so: but logic, though indispensable, concerns only the *formal* part of reasoning, and is therefore only its *negative* condition: your reasoning will be bad if it offends against the rules of logic; but it will not be good simply by conforming to them. To use a word equivocally for instance, *i.e.* in two senses, will be in effect to introduce four terms into your syllogism; and that will be enough to vitiate it. But will it of necessity heal your argument to exterminate this dialectic error? Surely not; the *matter* of your reason-

ing is the grand point; and this can no more be derived from logic than a golden globe from the geometry of the sphere. It is through the fancy, and by means of the *schemata* which that faculty furnishes to the understanding, that reasoning (good or bad) proceeds, as to its positive or *material* part, on most of the topics which interest mankind: the *vis imaginatrix* of the mind is the true *fundus* from which the understanding draws; and it may be justly said in an axiomatic form that "tantum habet homo discursus quantum habet phantasiæ."

On this doctrine, however, at another time: meantime I would ask of any reader to whom it appears wonderful,—For what purpose he supposes the fancy to exist? If a physiologist meets with a part in the human body (as the spleen, *e.g.*) whose uses he is unable to explain, he never allows himself to pronounce it a superfluity, but takes it for granted that it performs some useful functions in the animal economy which will appear on further knowledge. But, as to the fancy, to judge by the language of most men, it should seem to make a part of our intellectual system simply for the sake of being resisted by the understanding, or of furnishing an object of invective to moralists. If, however, the reflecting reader is forced to acknowledge that such an estimate is childish and absurd as applied to any intellectual faculty, he may perhaps endeavour to make himself more particularly acquainted with the purposes of this; which in that case he will find as various and as important as those of any other whatsoever. (*N.B.*—I have here used the words Fancy, Imagination, Imaginative Power, as equivalent to each other; because it was not necessary for the present purpose to take notice of them in any other relation than that of contradistinction to the formal understanding or *Logos*).

MADNESS

I AM persuaded myself that all madness, or nearly all, takes its rise in some part of the apparatus connected with the digestive organs, most probably in the liver. That the

brain is usually supposed to be the seat of madness has arisen from two causes : first, because the brain is universally considered the organ of thought,—on which account any disease which disturbs the thinking principle is naturally held to be seated there ; secondly, because in dissections of lunatics some lesion or disorganisation of the brain has been generally found. Now, as to the first argument, I am of opinion that the brain has been considered the organ of thought chiefly in consequence of the strong direction of the attention to the head arising out of the circumstance that four of the senses, but especially that the two most intellectual of the senses, have their organs seated in that part of our structure. But, if we must use the phrase "organ of thought" at all, on many grounds I should be disposed to say that the brain and the stomach-apparatus through their reciprocal action and reaction jointly make up the compound organ of thought. Secondly, as to the *post-mortem* appearances in the brains of lunatics, no fact is better ascertained in modern pathology than the *metastasis*, or translation to some near or remote organ, of a disease which had primarily affected the liver,—generally from sympathy, as it is called, but sometimes, in the case of neighbouring organs, from absolute pressure when the liver is enlarged. In such cases, the sympathetic disorder, which at first is only apparent, soon becomes real, and unrealises the original one. The brain and the lungs are in all cases of diseased liver, I believe, liable beyond any other organs to this morbid sympathy ; and, supposing a peculiar mode of diseased liver to be the origin of madness, this particular mode we may assume to have as one part of its peculiarity a more uniform determination than other modes to this general tendency of the liver to generate a secondary disease in the brain. Admitting all this, however, it will be alleged that it merely weakens or destroys the objections to such a theory ; but what is the positive argument in its behalf ? I answer —my own long experience, and, latterly, my own experiments directed to this very question, under the use of opium. For some years opium had simply affected the tone of my stomach ; but, as this went off, and the stomach, by medicine and exercise, &c., began to recover its strength, I observed that the liver began to suffer. Under the affection of this

organ I was sensible that the genial spirits decayed far more rapidly and deeply, and that with this decay the intellectual faculties had a much closer sympathy. Upon this I tried some scores of experiments, raising and lowering alternately, for periods of 48, 60, 72, or 84 hours, the quantity of opium. The result I may perhaps describe more particularly elsewhere[1]: in substance it amounted to this,—that, as the opium began to take effect, the whole living principle of the intellectual motions began to lose its elasticity, and, as it were, to petrify; I began to comprehend the tendency of madness to eddy about one idea; and the loss of power to abstract—to hold abstractions steadily before me—or to exercise many other intellectual acts, was in due proportion to the degree in which the biliary system seemed to suffer. It is impossible in a short compass to describe all that took place; it is sufficient to say that the power of the biliary functions to affect and to modify the power of thinking according to the degree in which they were themselves affected, and in a way far different from the action of good or bad spirits, was prodigious, and gave me a full revelation of the way in which insanity begins to collect and form itself. During all this time my head was unaffected. And I am now more than ever disposed to think that some affection of the liver is in most cases the sole proximate cause, or, if not, an indispensable previous condition, of madness.

ENGLISH PHYSIOLOGY

In spite of our great advantages for prosecuting Physiology in England, the whole science is yet in a languishing condition amongst us; and purely for the want of first principles and a more philosophic spirit of study. Perhaps at this moment the best service which could be rendered to this subject would be to translate, and to exhibit in a very luminous aspect, all that Kant has written on the question of teleology, or the doctrine of Final Causes. Certainly the *prima philosophia* of the science must be in a deplorable

[1] See *ante*, Vol. III, pp. 466-472.—M.

condition when it could be supposed that Mr. Lawrence's book brought forward any new arguments in behalf of materialism,[1] or that in the old argument which he has used (an argument proceeding everywhere on a metaphysical confusion which I will notice in a separate paper) there was anything very formidable.—I have mentioned this book, however, not for the purpose of criticising it generally, but of pointing out one unphilosophic remark of a practical tendency which may serve to strengthen prejudices that are already too strong. On examining certain African skulls, Mr. Lawrence is disposed, with many other physiologists, to find the indications of inferior intellectual faculties in the bony structure as compared with that of the Caucasian skull. In this conclusion I am disposed to coincide ; for there is nothing unphilosophic in supposing a scale of intellectual gradations amongst different races of men, any more than in supposing such a gradation amongst the different individuals of the same nation. But it is in a high degree unphilosophic to suppose that Nature ever varies her workmanship for the sake of absolute degradation. Through all differences of degree she pursues some difference of kind which could not perhaps have coexisted with a higher degree. If, therefore, the negro intellect be in some of the higher qualities inferior to that of the European, we may reasonably presume that this inferiority exists for the purpose of obtaining some compensatory excellence in lower qualities that could not else have existed. This would be agreeable to the analogy of Nature's procedure in other instances : for, by thus creating no absolute and entire superiority in any quarter, but distributing her gifts in parts, and making the several divisions of men the complements, as it were, of each other, she would point to that same intermixture of all the races with each other which on other grounds, *a priori* as well as empirical, we have reason to suppose one of her final purposes, and which the course of human events is manifestly preparing.

[1] The reference, I suppose, is to "Lectures on Physiology, Zoology, and the Natural History of Man, by William Lawrence (Surgeon)," published in 1819.—M.

SUPERFICIAL KNOWLEDGE

It is asserted that this is the age of superficial knowledge; and amongst the proofs of this assertion we find encyclopædias and other popular abstracts of knowledge particularly insisted on. But in this notion and in its alleged proofs there is equal error:—Wherever there is much diffusion of knowledge there must be a good deal of superficiality; prodigious *extension* implies a due proportion of weak *intension*; a sea-like expansion of knowledge will cover large shallows as well as large depths. But in that quarter in which it is superficially cultivated the intellect of this age is properly opposed in any just comparison to an intellect without any culture at all:—leaving the deep soils out of the comparison, the shallow ones of the present day would in any preceding one have been barren wastes. Of this our modern encyclopædias are the best proof. For whom are they designed, and by whom used? By those who in a former age would have gone to the fountain-heads? No, but by those who in any age preceding the present would have drunk at no waters at all. Encyclopædias are the growth of the last hundred years not because those who were formerly students of higher learning have descended, but because those who were below encyclopædias have ascended. The greatness of the ascent is marked by the style in which the more recent encyclopædias are executed. At first they were mere abstracts of existing books—well or ill executed; at present they contain many *original* articles of great merit. As in the periodical literature of the age, so in the encyclopædias, it has become a matter of ambition with the publishers to retain the most eminent writers in each several department. And hence it is that our encyclopædias now display one characteristic of this age—the very opposite of superficiality (and which on other grounds we are well assured of)—viz. its tendency in science, no less than in other applications of industry, to extreme subdivision. In all the employments which are dependent in any degree upon the political economy of nations, this tendency is too obvious to have

been overlooked. Accordingly, it has long been noticed for congratulation in manufactures and the useful arts, and for censure in the learned professions. We have now, it is alleged, no great and comprehensive lawyers like Coke[1]; and the study of medicine is subdividing itself into a distinct ministry (as it were) not merely upon the several organs of the body (oculists, aurists, dentists, chiropodists, etc.), but almost upon the several diseases of the same organ: one man is distinguished for the treatment of liver complaints of one class—a second for those of another class; one man for asthma—another for phthisis; and so on. As to the Law, the evil (if it be one) lies in the complex state of society,—which of necessity makes the laws complex: law itself is become unwieldy and beyond the grasp of one man's term of life and possible range of experience, and will never again come within them. With respect to Medicine the case is no evil, but a great benefit—so long as the subdividing principle does not descend too low to allow of a perpetual re-ascent into the generalising principle (the τὸ commune) which secures the unity of the science. In ancient times all the evil of such a subdivision was no doubt realised in Egypt; for there a distinct body of professors took charge of each organ of the body,—not (as we may be assured) from any progress of the science outgrowing the time and attention of the general professor, but simply from an ignorance of the organic structure of the human body and the reciprocal action of the whole upon each part and the parts upon the whole,—an ignorance of the same kind which has led sailors seriously (and not merely, as may sometimes have happened, by way of joke) to reserve one ulcerated leg to their own management whilst the other was given up to the management of the surgeon. With respect to law and medicine, then, the difference between ourselves and our ancestors is not subjective but objective: not, *i.e.*, in our faculties who study them, but in the things themselves which are the objects of study. Not we (the students) are grown less, but they (the studies) are grown bigger; and that our ancestors did not subdivide as much as we do was something of their luck,

[1] Sir Edward Coke, English judge and statesman, author of *Coke upon Littleton*, &c., 1549-1634.—M.

but no part of their merit.—Simply as subdividers therefore to the extent which now prevails, we are less superficial than any former age. In all parts of science the same principle of subdivision holds: here, therefore, no less than in those parts of knowledge which are the subjects of distinct civil professions, we are of necessity more profound than our ancestors, but, for the same reason, less comprehensive than they. Is it better to be a profound student, or a comprehensive one? In some degree this must depend upon the direction of the studies; but generally, I think, it is better for the interests of knowledge that the scholar should aim at profundity, and better for the interests of the individual that he should aim at comprehensiveness. A due balance and equilibrium of the mind is best preserved by a large and multiform knowledge; but knowledge itself is best served by an exclusive (or at least paramount) dedication of one mind to one science. The first proposition is perhaps unconditionally true, but the second with some limitations. There are such people as Leibnitzes on this earth; and their office seems not that of planets—to revolve within the limits of one system, but that of comets (according to the theory of some speculators)—to connect different systems together. No doubt there is much truth in this: a few Leibnitzes in every age would be of much use: but neither are many men fitted by nature for the part of Leibnitz, nor would the aspect of knowledge be better if they were. We should then have a state of Grecian life amongst us, in which every man individually would attain in a moderate degree all the purposes of the sane understanding, but in which all the purposes of the sane understanding would be but moderately attained. What I mean is this:—Let all the objects of the understanding in civil life or in science be represented by the letters of the alphabet: in Grecian life each man would separately go through all the letters in a tolerable way; whereas at present each letter is served by a distinct body of men. Consequently the Grecian individual is superior to the modern; but the Grecian whole is inferior: for the whole is made up of the individuals; and the Grecian individual repeats himself. Whereas in modern life the whole derives its superiority from the very circumstances

which constitute the inferiority of the parts: for modern life is *cast* dramatically; and the difference is as between an army consisting of soldiers who should each individually be competent to go through the duties of a dragoon, of a hussar, of a sharpshooter, of an artilleryman, of a pioneer, etc., and an army on its present composition, where the very inferiority of the soldier as an individual—his inferiority in compass and versatility of power and knowledge—is the very ground from which the army derives its superiority as a whole, viz. because it is the condition of the possibility of a total surrender of the individual to one exclusive pursuit.—In science, therefore, and (to speak more generally) in the whole evolution of the human faculties, no less than in Political Economy, the progress of society brings with it a necessity of sacrificing the ideal of what is excellent for the individual to the ideal of what is excellent for the whole. We need, therefore, not trouble ourselves (except as a speculative question) with the comparison of the two states; because, as a practical question, it is precluded by the overruling tendencies of the age—which no man could counteract except in his own single case, *i.e.* by refusing to adapt himself as a part to the whole, and thus forgoing the advantages of either one state or the other.[1]

[1] The latter part of what is here said coincides, in a way which is rather remarkable, with a passage in an interesting work of Schiller's which I have since read (on the *Æsthetic Education of Men*, in a series of letters: vid. letter the 6th). "With us, in order to obtain the "representative *word* (as it were) of the total species, we must spell "it out by the help of a series of individuals. So that, on a survey "of society as it actually exists, one might suppose that the faculties "of the mind do really in actual experience show themselves in as "separate a form, and in as much insulation, as psychology is forced "to exhibit them in its analysis. And thus we see not only indi-"viduals, but whole classes of men, unfolding only one part of the "germs which are laid in them by the hand of nature. In saying "this I am fully aware of the advantages which the human species of "modern ages has, when considered as a unity, over the best of "antiquity; but the comparison should begin with the individuals—"and then let me ask, where is the modern individual that would "have the presumption to step forward against the Athenian individual, "man to man, and to contend for the prize of human excellence?—"The polypus nature of the Grecian republics, in which every indi-"vidual enjoyed a separate life, and, if it were necessary, could

MANUSCRIPTS OF MELMOTH

A LADY who had been educated by Melmoth (the translator, author of *Fitzosborne's Letters*, &c.[1]) told me, about the year 1813, that she had a trunk full of his manuscripts. As an

" become a whole, has now given place to an artificial watchwork,
" where many lifeless parts combine to form a mechanic whole. The
" state and the church, laws and manners, are now torn asunder;
" labour is divided from enjoyment, the means from the end, the
" exertion from the reward. Chained for ever to a little individual
" fraction of the whole, man himself is moulded into a fraction; and,
" with the monotonous whirling of the wheel which he turns everlast-
" ingly in his ear, he never develops the harmony of his being, and,
" instead of imaging the totality of human nature, becomes a bare
" abstract of his business or the science which he cultivates. The
" dead letter takes the place of the living understanding; and a
" practised memory becomes a surer guide than genius and sensibility.
" Doubtless the power of genius, as we all know, will not fetter itself
" within the limits of its occupation; but talents of mediocrity are
" all exhausted in the monotony of the employment allotted to them;
" and that man must have no common head who brings with him the
" geniality of his powers unstripped of their freshness by the ungenial
" labours of life to the cultivation of the genial."—After insisting at some length on this wise, Schiller passes to the other side of the contemplation, and proceeds thus:—"It suited my immediate purpose to
" point out the injuries of this condition of the species without dis-
" playing the compensations by which nature has balanced them.
" But I will now readily acknowledge that, little as this practical
" condition may suit the interests of the individual, yet the species
" could in no other way have been progressive. Partial exercise of
" the faculties [literally '*one-sidedness* in the exercise of the faculties'] leads the individual undoubtedly into error, but the species into
" truth. In no other way than by concentrating the whole energy of
" our spirit, and by converging our whole being, so to speak, into a
" single faculty, can we put wings, as it were, to the individual
" faculty, and carry it by this artificial flight far beyond the limits
" within which nature has else doomed it to walk. Just as certain
" as it is that all human beings could never, by clubbing their visual
" powers together, have arrived at the power of seeing what the
" telescope discovers to the astronomer; just so certain it is that the
" human intellect would never have arrived at an analysis of the
" infinite, or a *Critical Analysis of the Pure Reason* (the principal
" work of Kant), unless individuals had dismembered (as it were) and
" insulated this or that specific faculty, and had thus armed their

[1] William Melmoth, 1710-1799, translator of Cicero and Pliny, and author of "Letters on several subjects by Sir Thomas Fitzosborne."—M.

article of literary gossip, this may as well be made known; for some author, writing a biographical dictionary, may be interested in knowing all that can be now known of Melmoth, and may even wish to examine his manuscripts, which (from the liberality of the lady) I am confident would be readily lent. For my part, I never looked into *Fitzosborne's Letters* since my boyhood; but the impression I then derived from them was that Melmoth was a fribble in literature, and one of the "sons of the feeble." Accordingly, I shrunk myself even from the "sad civility" of asking to look at the manuscripts. Melancholy lot of an author—that, after a life of literary toil, he must be destined to no better fate than that of inflicting an emotion of pure disgust upon a literary man when he is told that he may have the sight of "a great trunkful" of his manuscripts! However, the lady was to some degree in the wrong for calling it "a *great* trunk"; if she had said "a *little* trunk" I might, perhaps, have felt some curiosity. The Sibyl was the first literary person who understood the doctrine of market price; and all authors, unless they write for money to meet an immediate purpose, should act upon her example, and irritate the taste for whatever merit their works may have by cautiously abstaining from overstocking the market.

SCRIPTURAL ALLUSION EXPLAINED

In p. 50 of the "Annotations" upon Glanvill's *Lux Orientalis*[1] the author (who was, I believe, Henry More the

"intellectual sight by the keenest abstraction, and by the submersion "of the other powers of their nature.—Extraordinary men are formed, "then, by energetic and overexcited spasms, as it were, in the indi- "vidual faculties, though it is true that the equable exercise of all "the faculties in harmony with each other can alone make happy and "perfect men."—After this statement, from which it should seem that in the progress of society nature has made it necessary for man to sacrifice *his own* happiness to the attainment of *her* ends in the development of his species, Schiller goes on to inquire whether this evil result cannot be remedied, and whether the "totality of our nature, which art has destroyed, might not be re-established by a higher art." But this, as leading to a discussion beyond the limits of my own, I omit.

[1] This *Lux Orientalis* was first published about 1662, but repub-

Platonist [1], having occasion to quote from the Psalms "The sun shall not burn thee by day, neither the moon by night" in order to illustrate that class of cases where an ellipsis is to be suggested by the sense rather than directly indicated, says "The word *burn* cannot be repeated, but some other more suitable verb is to be supplied." A gentleman, however, who has lately returned from Upper Egypt, &c., assures me that the moon *does* produce an effect on the skin which may as accurately be expressed by the word "burn" as any solar effect. By sleeping a few hours under the light of a full moon—which is as much shunned in some parts of the East as sleeping on the wet ground with us, or standing bareheaded under the noonday sun in Bengal—my informant brought a severe complaint upon his eyes.

lished with Annotations in 1682. [Joseph Glanvill, 1636-1680, author of *Sadducismus Triumphatus* and *Vanity of Dogmatizing*, was the author also of "*Lux Orientalis*, or an Enquiry into the Opinion of the Eastern Sages concerning the Pre-existence of Souls."—M.]

[1] Henry More, 1614-1687.—M.

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